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## The wisdom of the market

Samuel Brittan

EAMONN BUTLER  
*Hayek: His Contribution to the Political and Economic Thought of our Time*  
168pp. Temple Smith. £11.95 (paperback, £4). 0851172334

The career of Friedrich Hayek teaches us a great deal about intellectual and academic fashions. During the 1930s he was mainly known for technical economic studies, which were at the time overshadowed by the new Keynesian theories on unemployment and economic policy. In the 1940s he became a hate figure on the Left because of his onslaught on the case for centralized economic planning and his insistence on the links between political and economic freedom in his best-selling *Road to Serfdom*. Then followed decades of neglect, during which his most important constructive works on the foundations of a liberal society were written. Finally, following his Nobel prize in 1979, he emerged as a cult figure of the Radical Right. Many people would say that if Mrs Thatcher is a conviction politician, the convictions are those of Hayek.

The polarized nature of the response to Hayek has come to me recently in a more personal way. My general attitude has not changed materially since I first started to discuss Hayek's work seriously in the early 1970s. This is that he has gone much more deeply into the links between the market system and personal freedom than most other writers and that he has thrown important light on an enormous range of questions from the rule of law and the danger of elective dictatorship to the methodology of social sciences and the theory of money, but that he has not provided a logically watertight, all-embracing system and that it is possible to learn from his work without accepting all his particular policy views. Yet - depending on my exact order of presentation of this qualified view and the political context of the time - I have been regarded as everything from a card-carrying Hayekian to an implacable opponent of Hayek and all his works.

Eamonn Butler should have no such troubles. His book *Hayek* is deliberately expository rather than critical and will provide for many people a workmanlike introduction. There is far more to Hayek than the demolition of socialism and the standard case for free markets, and Butler's readers should obtain an inkling of what that "more" is. Yet I suspect that in presenting Hayek as a revered thinker with a complete system, Butler may be making his work neater, simpler and less interesting than it really is. One suspects that the real Hayek is a much more caustic and iconoclastic person than the public sage.

Hayek is attracted to three different political philosophies: (1) Classical liberalism: that is, liberalism in the old English rather than the American sense, with a strong emphasis on the rule of law, competitive markets and limited government; (2) Burkean conservatism: that is, an emphasis on the superior wisdom of institutions which have developed with time; and a belief that changes should be based on reducing "incoherences" in current traditions and practices, which themselves supply hints about adaptation to changing circumstances; (3) Evolutionary ethics: this recent addition to Hayek's scheme emphasizes the survival of the human race, and its development to higher levels, and judges institutions and ideas in terms of social biology.

Occasionally these three different approaches, as in the nostalgic view of Glads-tonian England, may point in a similar direction. Usually, however, they are in conflict. In the USSR, dictatorship and state control embody the traditional wisdom, and proponents of free elections or free markets there could be accused of just that kind of "constructivist rationalism" with which Hayek charges radicals in the West. The co-existence of these three and other disparate elements in Hayek's thought is no tragedy. The interest arises from the very tensions between them.

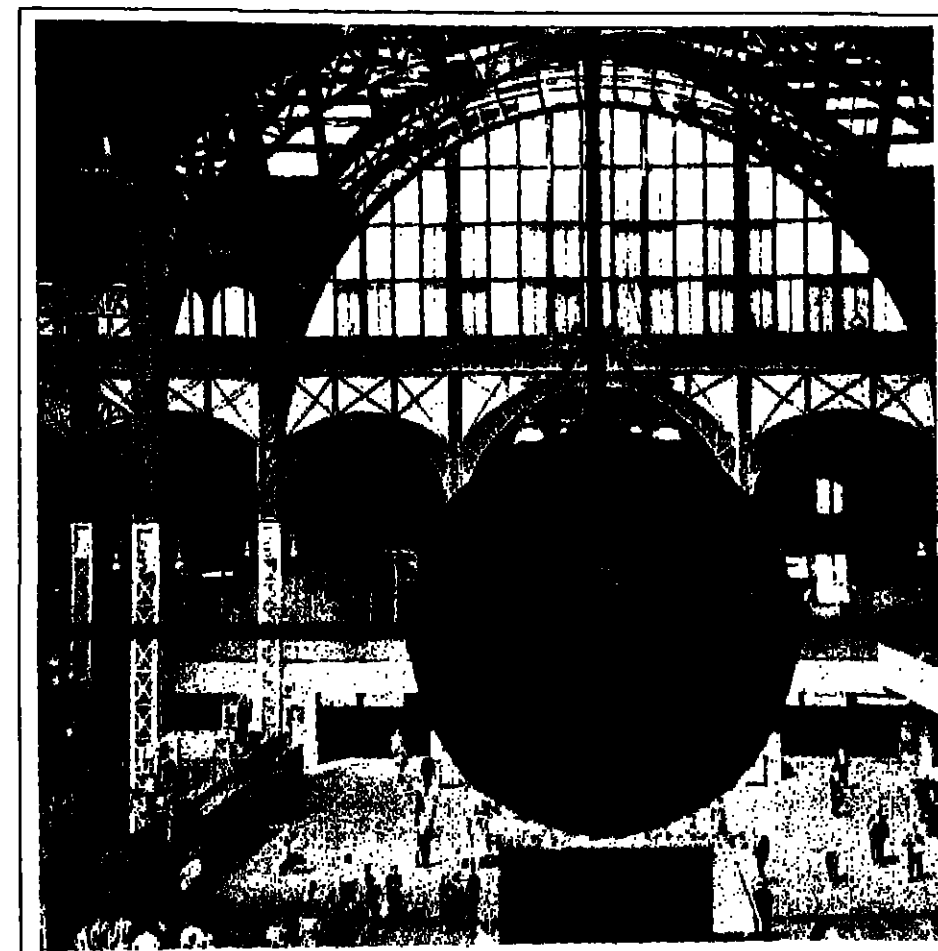
One topic which reveals how radical and unconventional Hayek can be is his approach to the idea that there can be a "just reward" for particular forms of occupations, which might eventually be enforced by some ideal incentive policy. In *The Constitution of Liberty* and his

latest trilogy, *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, Hayek denies that there is such a thing as a "just reward" or that people's relative pay should reflect their merit. This has usually been interpreted as an attack on measures to improve the wages of the poorly paid or reduce high salaries and profits. In fact Hayek's attack is directed just as much at conventional defenders of free enterprise who believe that the market wage for a person's services represents his marginal value to society and is therefore just.

So far from being just, market rewards depend, Hayek argues, on an unpredictable mixture of effect, ability and luck. A person is not responsible for his genetic inheritance. Still less is he responsible for the vagaries of the market, which can cause a collapse of the demand for an occupation for which someone has had a life of training. It is fruitless to debate whether truck drivers should receive less than junior college professors as they did before the Second World War, or more, as they do in contemporary America. It is the market, not the merit, that has changed.

fashionable - even ignored - in the 1950s and 60s. At a time when most go-ahead economists were rearing to equip themselves with forecasting models and computer printouts, Hayek seemed an armchair thinker preoccupied with out-of-date ideas such as the limitations of human knowledge and the difficulties that economists would have if they tried to ape the natural scientist. Even today an essay by Hayek is more likely to attract the attention of political theorists or (though Hayek would hate the term) "sociologists", than of economists.

But the contrast does not necessarily tell against Hayek. A disadvantage of current methodological orthodoxy is that many economists have acquired a vested interest in the existence of stable, discoverable numerical relationships between phenomena such as income and consumption, or short-run changes in the money supply and the price level. One cannot rule out the successful discovery of relationships of this kind; but equally one cannot guarantee it; and it is Hayek who pointed out that scientific method can still be applied to



"Pennsylvania Station 1963" by Walker Evans, from Walker Evans at Work (238pp. Thames and Hudson. Paperback £7.95. 0 500 27304 9).

predict certain general features of an interacting system in the absence of specific numerical relationships. Such procedures are commonplace, for example, in biology and linguistics. Milton Friedman, by contrast, fitted the contemporary mood exactly. Despite the unfashionable nature of his policy views he spoke the same language as the postwar Keynesians, fitted equations to time series and provided a wide new field for economists in the investigation of "demand for money functions", which multiplied enormously their employment opportunities. Indeed, Friedman's contribution was essential. For if age-old verities about the relation between money and prices, or the futility of nations trying to spend themselves into full employment, were to be rehabilitated, it had to be in modern statistical dress.

But the very modernity of Friedman has meant that he has been vulnerable to new researchers claiming to refute his work by still more up-to-date statistical methods. By contrast Hayek's insistence that, while inflation is a monetary phenomenon, there is no such thing as the quantity of money and no sharp boundary between money and other financial assets has stood the test of time much better. The experience of Mrs Thatcher's government, which overshot its monetary targets by miles in its first couple of years, but nevertheless presided over a sharp fall in the inflation rate, is much less puzzling to a Hayekian than a Friedmanite. So, too, is the high unemployment cost of the reduction in inflation, which Hayek has always insisted would be inevitable while labour markets were dominated by union

monopolies, whose influence the Friedmanites have usually played down.

Hayek's defence of the market system is also subtly different from that of many other economists. Whereas mainstream economists have been preoccupied with the optimal allocation of resources in given conditions, Hayek has been concerned with the effect of the market system on the evolution and stability of society. He has been interested in markets as examples of human institutions, like language or law, which have evolved without any conscious plan on anyone's part.

Wants, techniques and resources are not given, he points out, but constantly changing - in part due to the activities of entrepreneurs who open up possibilities which people did not know existed before. The market system is a "discovery technique" rather than a way of allocating known resources among known wants with known techniques. The latter problem could, in principle at least, be solved by computers on the principle that people's preferences should be satisfied to the maximum possible extent for any given distribution of income. No computer can predict, however, the emergence of new knowledge, original ideas, or commercial innovations - and people's reactions to them.

The market also provides a method of coordinating the activities of millions of people and of solving problems without a vast apparatus of political decision and of governmental enforcement. The very existence of this self-regulating system is quite unsuspected by ninety-nine per cent of the population, who assume that we must have a national or international "policy" for energy, jobs, productivity, or whatever other problem hits the newspaper headlines. The Hayekian approach does not solve all problems. Hayek sees the market network as a gradually evolving social system rather than as a mathematical solution to the problem of resource allocation on the basis of known, certain, and unchanging information. But, like language and law, the transmission and incentive mechanism of the market can be improved. So shifting attention from the static allocation of resources to "the market as a discovery procedure" does not remove the issue of intervention.

Hayek has not, in fact, provided any easily recognizable criteria for identifying state intervention of the harmful type. The free-market arguments in *The Road to Serfdom* were based on the incompatibility of central planning with personal liberty. In subsequent years Hayek has approached the issue indirectly. He has argued, especially in *The Constitution of Liberty*, that the main condition for a free society is what he calls the "rule of law". He certainly does not mean by that that the mere observance by rulers of constitutionally enacted laws is enough. On the contrary he would condemn many perfectly valid legislative acts for being arbitrary, discriminatory, and giving far too much discretion to politicians and officials. By "the rule of law" he means a presumption in favour of general rules and against discretionary power. Hayek attempts to derive not only the fundamental political and legal basis, but also the economic policies, of a free society from this conception.

Hayek is right to emphasize that general rules are an important protection - perhaps the most important single protection - for freedom. However, he often argues as if general laws are a sufficient condition for a free society; and this is mistaken. Many policies involving a high degree of coercion can be imposed by general rules - eg, a ban on the teaching of evolution in the southern states of America, or on any literature or music which flouts the principles of Marxist Leninism in the Soviet Union. There is no one philosopher's stone for minimizing coercion in society.

Moreover, neither Hayek nor anyone else has been able to give a statement of the doctrine of the rule of general laws which will make clear what it implies in particular cases. To say that "laws must not single out named individuals" would not be controversial even among collectivists, and would not be enough to protect us against a great deal of arbitrary legislation. On the other hand, general rules must mention categories: traffic laws deal with motorists, sales taxes make traders liable and so on. Once this is admitted, it is very difficult

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Hodder &amp; Stoughton



# A missionary and her moonings

José Harris

**BEATRICE WEBB**  
*Diary, Volume Two, 1892-1905: All the Good Things of Life*  
 Edited by Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie  
 376pp. Virago/London School of Economics.  
 £18.  
 086068210

The first volume of this new edition of the Passfield diaries (reviewed in the *TLS* on October 15, 1982) left Beatrice firmly thrusting romantic fantasies behind her and setting out on a new career of science and social service: the newly married Mrs Sidney Webb. The present volume carries the Webb partnership up to 1905, and covers the years of the Webbs' research on trade unions, the beginning of their history of local government, their foundation of the LSE and support for the Balfour Education Act, their disillusion with "Progressive" politics and shift to a political strategy of wire-pulling and permeation.

This may sound to many readers like a diet of cold porridge, but such an impression could scarcely be further from the truth. It is a measure of Beatrice's diarial genius that she could infuse the most humdrum situations - breakfast with trade unionists, interviews with lady factory inspectors, dusty afternoons in provincial libraries - with narrative tension, human drama, and symbolic confrontation between rival abstract ideas. Even when she climbed on to a private soapbox and lectured herself on such questions as "authoritative mental hygiene" or "scientific method as the basis of political action", the result, though sometimes absurd and occasionally horrifying, was never dull.

The latest volume includes unforgettable verbal portraits of the great and the obscure: Lord Rosebery sulking in his tent with "drugged look, heavy eyes and morbid flesh"; the "sad lavender" complexion of a discarded

mistress of Bernard Shaw; Graham Wallis "living in a grey cloudland of dutiful effort"; Beatrice's sister, Blanche Cripps, "too madly noble and nobly mad". The entries abound with striking if somewhat malicious social comment - on Liberal "prigs thrust into office", "Labour men full of gassy optimism", the "slim aristocrats, well-fed and slightly dissipated-looking" of metropolitan Toryism. Even Beatrice's own family did not escape her scalpel; its hard, acquisitive menfold and decoratively idle women were dissected with the cold-eyed clarity of Edith Wharton's *House of Mirrors*. Moreover, although the Webbs perhaps exaggerated their own role in history, there can be no doubt that they were closely involved in many historic movements and public events. Beatrice's journals chronicled these happenings in a way that was unique in late-Victorian and Edwardian history. She was "the Pepsy of the nineteenth century", wrote Charles Trevelyan (himself an unwitting victim of Beatrice's mordant pen).

For all its absorbing interest as a political archive, however, the heart of this second volume lies, as with its predecessor, in the unfolding of the inner personality of Beatrice herself. The volume begins with her dedicating herself to Sidney's interests, identifying herself with Sidney's "secular and revolutionary set", and congratulating herself on the safe harbour of a "comradely" marriage. A decade later she was still celebrating the "perpetual honeymoon" of their life together and the ever-strengthening bonds of married love. In all this, however, there was a certain element of whistling to keep up her spirits, for the diaries make it clear that throughout her early married life Beatrice was still tormented by her old demons of unsatisfied religious yearning and sexual passion. Throughout the 1890s her former obsession with Joseph Chamberlain keeps breaking through, in the form of detailed analysis of his character, critical commentary on his demagogic imperialism, and continual re-living of the scattered episodes of their

mutual past. "I wonder that I, a happy wife, should brood over the thought of this day six years ago", she writes in July 1893 on the anniversary of her last meeting with Chamberlain. "Since that day we have not met. But he is always there: year in year out I watch him . . . as a man he becomes steadily more vulgar; as a political thinker more ill-informed. And yet he loses neither his interest, nor his charm, at least not to one of his humble fellows."

As in earlier years she was constantly lapsing into "moonings", "dreaming" and the "dis-eased rumblings" of sexual fantasy - rumblings which were kept at bay by hard work, long holidays, a grateful consciousness of Sidney's patient devotion and "an almost religious sense of my intellectual mission". After eight years of marriage had passed Beatrice was healthier, happier, less morbid than she had ever been before; but then in July 1900 she met Joseph Chamberlain once again on the terrace of the House of Commons:

We looked at each other and I stepped forward and we shook hands. 'I should like to introduce my husband to you' I said. . . . then I . . . turned to fellow guests and tried hard to make conversation . . . I felt conscious that all the company became extremely polite and I cursed the fate that brought the casual reopening of the relationship again under the eye of London Society.

The effect on Beatrice of this one brief meeting was traumatic and prolonged. For several years she was "struggling with terrible depression", her mind "a prey to idle chatterings of personal vanity", her imagination "overtaken with a presentiment of disease and death". The diary once again rehearses all the minute details of her past dealings with Chamberlain. She daydreams of lovers and of unborn babies, and her unhappiness manifests itself physically in prolonged attacks of eczema and anorexia. It is accompanied also by a reopening of the cosmic void that had haunted Beatrice as a young woman. The result is a powerful resurgence of her earlier interest in mysticism and sacramental religion. She attends communion

regularly at St Paul's, reads works of theology and the lives of the saints, and seeks the company of modern practitioners of holiness, like Bishop Gore. "The relation of man's mind to the universe" is "constantly present" in her thoughts and she is continually oppressed by "the meaninglessness of life on this miserable planet". None of these thoughts could be shared with Sidney, who sees metaphysics as "leading nowhere and as not capable of what he considers valid discussion". Beatrice was therefore driven back on her diary and on the imaginary Other One with whom she had communed in the days before her marriage; the diary became not merely a record of society and politics, but an impassioned outlet for her secret inner life.

Beatrice's depression of the early 1900s lasted for several years, and traces of the morbid asceticism that accompanied it lasted the rest of her life. By 1903, however, she had begun to piece herself together again by feverish efforts at research and by absorption in the post-Boer War movement for promoting "national efficiency". The mid-1900s was the period of her most celebrated success as a salon-hostess, when Balfours, Asquiths, and politicians of all parties flocked to accept the Webbs' hospitality at 41 Grosvenor Road. (The diary reveals that, contrary to later folklore, they were served with vintage port laid down by Beatrice's father and delicacies sent up by train from the Potter country estates.) We leave Beatrice in a period of political confusion and realignment, when the Webbs felt themselves increasingly out of sympathy with Liberal progressivism, much more in tune with intellectual Conservatives like the Balfours and tough-minded administrative reformers of the Edwardian radical right. It was this connection that was shortly to produce Beatrice's invitation to sit on the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws. One waits with speculative anticipation for her next appearance, as authoress of the famous Minority Report and matriarch of the welfare state.

# A plea for madness

George Steiner

**CHRISTOPHER MIDDLETON**  
*The Pursuit of the Kingfisher: Essays*  
 207pp. Manchester: Carcanet. £14.95.  
 0856354732  
 111 Poems  
 185pp. Manchester: Carcanet. Paperback.  
 £5.95.  
 0856354571

Christopher Middleton stands apart. Those who have seen where he lives on the edge of the Texan desert, outside Austin, will know how apt is his self-description: "a scatty hermit feeling out formal relations between cobwebs and starlight". Middleton argues his singularity in respect both of a positive vision and of contraries. Repeatedly, in *The Pursuit of the Kingfisher*, a collection of personal essays and working-papers, he expounds a lost but indispensable ideal:

Once there was a vision, shared by poets and sages . . . of the world as a great pattern of interlocking depths and surfaces, a continuous physiognomy or semiotic system, from which could be read, with a little luck, much study, and a measure of belief, the features of a divine mind.

Authentic poetry - that of Goethe, Hölderlin, Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Mandelstam - "was a minute exegesis of creation, scrupulously composed by one who could believe that he participated in creation's formative processes". In true poetry, as in the Kabbalist's image of the "bursting of the vessels" of creation, there is "the sort of texture which haunts mem-

ory and imagination, gradually, but in bursts, it reveals various 'meanings' when dwelt on - or caught up with - in mind. Actually the lyrical character is an ensemble, a gestalt: the clay around the gold, the vases which enhance the resonance." Pound's *Canto XVII* enacts this gestalt and the "breaking loose of the wild particle" of clairvoyant mystery. Walter Benjamin and Martin Heidegger are readers of and thinkers on poetry whose perceptions take us deep.

Feeling this way, seeking to articulate such persuasion in his own poetry and prose, Middleton is at odds with what he takes to be the English literary, spiritual climate. The "pure ensemble of the poem can, however, slide the other way - into the somnolent, message-laden rationality, the moralistic slog, of cerebral or literary poetry *à l'anglaise*". The English scene is one of merely "suave poetry which has been pushed to the margins", as distinct from an "exigent poetry, hard-bitten poetry, which goes to the limits of the conceivable and thus relocates the centre". Its available stylistic options put *suavitas* before magnitude and *sanitas* before "the grand old madness". The inevitable consequence, finds Middleton, is a poetry which only leaves one "psychologically prepared for the next tea party".

Advocacy for "the grand old madness" is, of course, not novel. In different modulations Middleton's plea can be heard coming from, say, Laura Riding, or Robert Graves, or John Cowper Powys, or David Jones. Nor is a sense of debilitating cosiness in English poetry singular to Middleton; the charge comes very near to

being a cliché. And one does not see how it is pertinent to the poetry of Ted Hughes, of James Fenton, of Christopher Logue's lament "Homer", to cite only the most obvious instances. None the less, I find myself generally on Christopher Middleton's side of the argument. His own linguistic range, the severe seriousness of his conception of the role of the poet and of the poet's reader in these "terrible times", his unembarrassed celebration of the visionary, "transcendent" potentialities in art and the imagination, are correctives to the entrenched provincialism of the current English manner. It is salutary to be reminded of the price which literature (and society) pay when "logos and language begin to go their separate ways".

Whoever puts forward the case for illumination and magnitude must win the reader's confidence to a quite exceptional degree. Middleton does not make things easy for those who would trust him. His vocabulary is often forbidding: "semiosis", "exoskeleton", "allo-tropic", "transgeneric", "archipelagic" (an epithet intelligible solely to those who recall its presences in Hölderlin), "morphogony". Names of fairly recondite psychologists, psycholinguists, anthropologists, visionaries, cascade. Sometimes a coy pomp intrudes: "I was flying across Texas with CM, the Polish poet; we sat in the front row of the cheaper seats, in 1969" - where reverent recognition of the man behind the initials is solicited. Too often, cardinal points are made esoteric by the style and syntax in which they are put:

Not the intermetaphoricity of body and space, mediated by water, has a real weight, to which measured fantastic play may contribute much, but which eludes perfect measurement, because of the Fall of language-mind away from body, on its unpredictable evolutionary track toward consciousness or with it.

Middleton's ideal is that of Goethe's intense yet playful integration of consciousness and the organic, of language and the world, of the down-to-earth and the hermetic. Though, strangely, he omits Auden, on whose poetry

and interpretations of human experience Goethe exercised a vivid influence, Middleton is justified in saying that "the English record is forlorn". But Middleton's own presentation of the "Orphic creed" (one recalls Elizabeth Sewall's sovereign treatment of this great theme) is not one of which Goethe would have altogether approved. There is, in a number of these short papers, a pained and painful irritability; the impression is less one of wholeness than of impatiently assembled bric-à-brac.

Middleton is at his best when he writes as a translator, when he places his own gifts at the exigent service of a master. He reports of Goethe:

A line begins, opens up, closes (with or without rhyme) but no sooner has it closed than it is opening into the next line, in a fugitive instant, pure transition. This shutter-flutter occurs even when the syntax entails complex subordination - those relative clauses, for instance, which in German promise a downward float into closure. What Goethe does is keep the shutterfluttering continuum in motion. There is an urgent forward motion sometimes large like the roll of attacking momentum in Beethoven, sometimes microscopic, as in Goethe's handling of the word "und" ('and').

This is practical criticism of the finest kind. We find it again in Middleton's close, scrupulously informed reading of syntax and signification in Hölderlin's "Andenken". In French, notably with reference to Baudelaire and Mallarmé, the touch seems less sure. But these several working-papers are invaluable contributions to the very limited (now growing) direct witness from the translator's workshop.

The *111 Poems* are selected from the few books of verse which Middleton has published since 1962. Middleton's characteristic tautness, his sinewy elegance and reach of invocation are amply represented. In one of my favourites, "Untitled", Middleton tells "Of that violence we make what we tenderly do". The immediate context is erotic. But I can think of few more concentrated and haunting formulations of this poet's craft, most especially when he is a translator.

## new left review

'Journals like . . . New Left Review . . . are the most interesting, and the most read.' (From a survey of learned journals in the *TLS* last December).

To find out why send for the latest issue, NLR143, containing Eric Hobsbawm on Marx and History, Mike Davis on the New Rich and the New Right in Reagan's America, Figga Haug on 'The Bi-sexuality of Morals', Ciaran Therborn responding to 'The Dominant Ideology Thesis', Jonas Pontusson critically surveying Theories of Swedish Social Democracy, Tamara Deutscher on Poland's First Marxists and Paul Coates on Film as the Story of the Lost Reflection.

Single copies £1.90/\$3.00, annual subscription £9 (inland) or \$22 (overseas), Multi-user £28 or \$40. New Left Review is Greek St, London W1C 0XZ. Special Offer: Subscribers may purchase Perry Anderson's latest book, *The Tracks of Electrical Materialism*, for only £3.95, post free. These lectures on Marxism and post-structuralism, socialism and feminism, Habermas and Foucault have been commended by Alan Ryan in the *Listener* as "good, strenuous, instructive, reading throughout and evidence of good sense, much learning and an open mind". In *New Society* Lloyd Spencer added: "a clear and penetrating survey".

## new left review

# Clinging and contending

Victoria Glendinning

**SYBIL OLDFIELD**  
*Spinsters of This Parish: The Life and Times of F. M. Mayor and Mary Sheepshanks*  
 328pp. Virago. Paperback. £5.95.  
 0860683915

The two spinsters in this book were friends - they met at Newnham - but not intimates; and Sybil Oldfield, who had planned a biography of F. M. Mayor, only began investigating Mary Sheepshanks on discovering that she had moved into Miss Mayor's house after the latter's death. Neither of these "forgotten" women on her own could have commanded much more than specialists' attention today, but taken together they make a valuable study in social and psychological contrasts.

Both were born in 1872, and the late-Victorian family, in its contradictory aspects, dominates Mrs Oldfield's book. Mary Sheepshanks was one of the seventeen children of a poor clergyman in a Liverpool suburb. Mother broke into "terrible fits of crying" with each new pregnancy, and the children, like rats in a crowded cage, turned on one another. Mary, plain and over-tall and the eldest girl, suffered most from the sadistic teasing, and cut away from them all as soon as she got to Cambridge.

Flora Mayor's experience was different. Her father was a prosperous cleric; a professor at King's College, London; the family lived in high bourgeois comfort in Kingston-upon-Thames. Flora was one of twins; she was the cleverer, while she was at Cambridge her beloved Alice stayed at home, bogged down in those long meals, short walks, handicrafts and good works that made life for an adult daughter at home little more than an indefinitely protracted childhood. Flora wrote to her every day, passing on every compliment she received ("Miss Dant remarked that I have by far the prettiest figure in the whole college"), after Cambridge, she having decided to go on the stage.

Her theatrical career was undistinguished, and the age of thirty she was engaged by a

proposal of marriage from a young architect, Ernest Shepherd. Alice was desolated at the prospect of being separated from her sister, and Flora, though she loved Ernest, put all her energies into persuading him to take on Alice as virtually a member of the wedding. For Alice's sake, she put the marriage off for six months - and in the interim, Ernest died. Flora and Alice were never parted again. Mrs Oldfield makes no judgment on the familial clinging; in this she proves to have not only a sense of history, but considerable charity. In opposite ways, the experience of Mary Sheepshanks and of Flora Mayor as girls exposes the myth, if myth there still remains, of Victorian family life.

One of Flora Mayor's brothers was an unsuccessful housemaster at a public school, a dour and repressed chap for whom the ageing twin sisters kept house until he married. Although Flora was, in theory, a suffragist; she and Alice grew more rigidly conservative and traditional in their attitudes as time passed. Yet there was more to Flora than this; she wrote novels that brought her acclaim in her day, two of which, *The Third Miss Symonds* and *The Rector's Daughter*, have stood the test of time. These novels, which examine with an unusual insight and candour the inner lives of women deprived of sensual or occupational fulfilment, are what drew Mrs Oldfield to write F. M. Mayor's life.

Mary Sheepshanks wrote to Flora Mayor in appreciation of *The Rector's Daughter*. Her own personality was at times very like that of her friend's fictional spinster - lonely, self-pitying, garrulous, defensive; but her achievements in the public arena were impressive. She left Cambridge with "advanced views" and plunged into social work in London. She became vice-principal of the new Morley College, and her active suffragist interests led her into the international women's movement and worldwide speaking-tours. A combative pacifist, she was hotly involved in the pacifist/patriot split in the movement in the First World War. She pioneered aid for refugees, and later became a committed and controversial secretary of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

Mrs Oldfield meshes the careers and experience of the two women, and spotlights their inherent weaknesses, deriving in each case from the family situation: Flora's almost exclusive emotional dependence on her small family circle could blind her to the fellow-humanity of those who were not Mayors, while Mary's sense of isolation from her huge family caused a predisposition in her at times of crisis to treat her later alternative families of friends as yet more hostile brothers and sisters against whom she had to wage a private war.

That is good; and this well-documented book is good, though a little over-weighty in tone. Mrs Oldfield has the habit of backing up her own insights with quotations: Dr Johnson, Karl Jaspers, Blake, Cowper, E. E. Moore, Jane Austen, Pascal, Virginia Woolf, Schiller and Rousseau are all summoned up to lend their supporting voices.

Mary Sheepshanks lived on until 1958. Then her daily help gave notice and, "very nearly blind and paralysed, but competent to the end", she killed herself. A spinster's death, perhaps. Today's unmarried woman rarely has the choice between doing nothing, like Alice Mayor, and working. And it nowadays we were to hear of a well-bred woman who writes successful novels, or of another woman who is prominent in social administration and presumes that either was unmarried, or even childless. Marriage has become a context, not a condition: in that sense, we are all spinsters now.

*Beyond Their Sex: Learned Women of the European Past*, seven essays edited by Patricia H. Labalme and inspired by the tercentenary of the first doctorate in philosophy awarded to a woman, Elena Cornaro, in 1678, has now appeared in paperback (188pp. New York University Press. \$17.00/£14.95). The essays include "The Education of Women in the Middle Ages in Theory, Fact, and Fantasy" by Joan M. Ferrante, "Learned Women in the Europe of the Sixteenth Century" by Roland H. Bainton and "Women as Historical Writers, 1400-1820" by Natalie Zemon Davis.

Jeremy Adler

**RAINER MALKOWSKI**  
*Zu Gast*  
 80pp. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp. DM18.  
 351804982  
**GERALD ZSCHORSCH**  
*Klappmesser*  
 79pp. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp. DM18.  
 351804990

The legacy of German Romanticism seemed to polarize after 1900 into poetry obscure and poetry plain; into the words of the sibyls (from Trakl on) and of the seafarers (Brecht & Co). Recent German verse often tries to reconcile these extremes in laconic pathos.

Rainer Malkowski came to poetry from advertising. His fourth collection continues on the lines first laid out in *Was für ein Morgen* (What a Morning) of 1975. The best poems there distilled the everyday into images, like a game of ducks and drakes in "Kiesel" ("Little Stones"), and imbued it with mournful reflectiveness. Perhaps it was inevitable that Malkowski should fall temporarily under the spell of Rilke. *Vom Ritsel ein Stück* (A Piece of the Puzzle) of 1980 contained rather too many images from Rilke's "inner space", and moved uncertainly between intellectual pathos and melancholy affirmation.

Part One of the new volume offers a variety of poems on death, writing, memory and small perceptions. Once again, a dead-pan profundity appears in the banal, as in "The Film":

Warum keine Aufnahme auf dem Film war,  
 verstanden wir nicht.  
 Auch der Fotoflicker  
 wusste keine zweifelsfreie  
 Erklärung.

Schwarze  
 Prophezie

(We could not understand / Why there was no picture / Even the dealer / Didn't know / An unequivocal / explanation / Black / Prophecy.)

Some of the best poems consist entirely of such epigrammatic observations. The technique produces a haiku-like accuracy in "Nocturnal Boredom": "The nails of my crooked fingers / Look at me / Like the blind", or even a kind of micro-folk-song after Rimbaud's "Voyelles" in "With a Twig in the Snow".

Part Two is about Rome. Some of the poems are fairly poor, they range from the cliché imagery of a Hockney figure dressed mainly in his Christian name, "Emilio's Guest", to the sprawling of the author's own bad conscience

in "Frutta? Dolce?" An underlying sense of alienation finally gets worked out in "At the End of the Plank" which evokes a typical tourist and confronts the image anew in the poet's memory. Such double exposure produces some fine effects. It is fitting that one poem should recall an ode by the originator of this device: "Bright, Motionless Night" clearly echoes Klopstock's famous "Summer Night". The collection ends with the longest and strongest piece: "My Rome" is almost a liturgical meditation, alternating pictures of the outer worlds with self-analysis: "Why can't I believe / That I am what I see?"

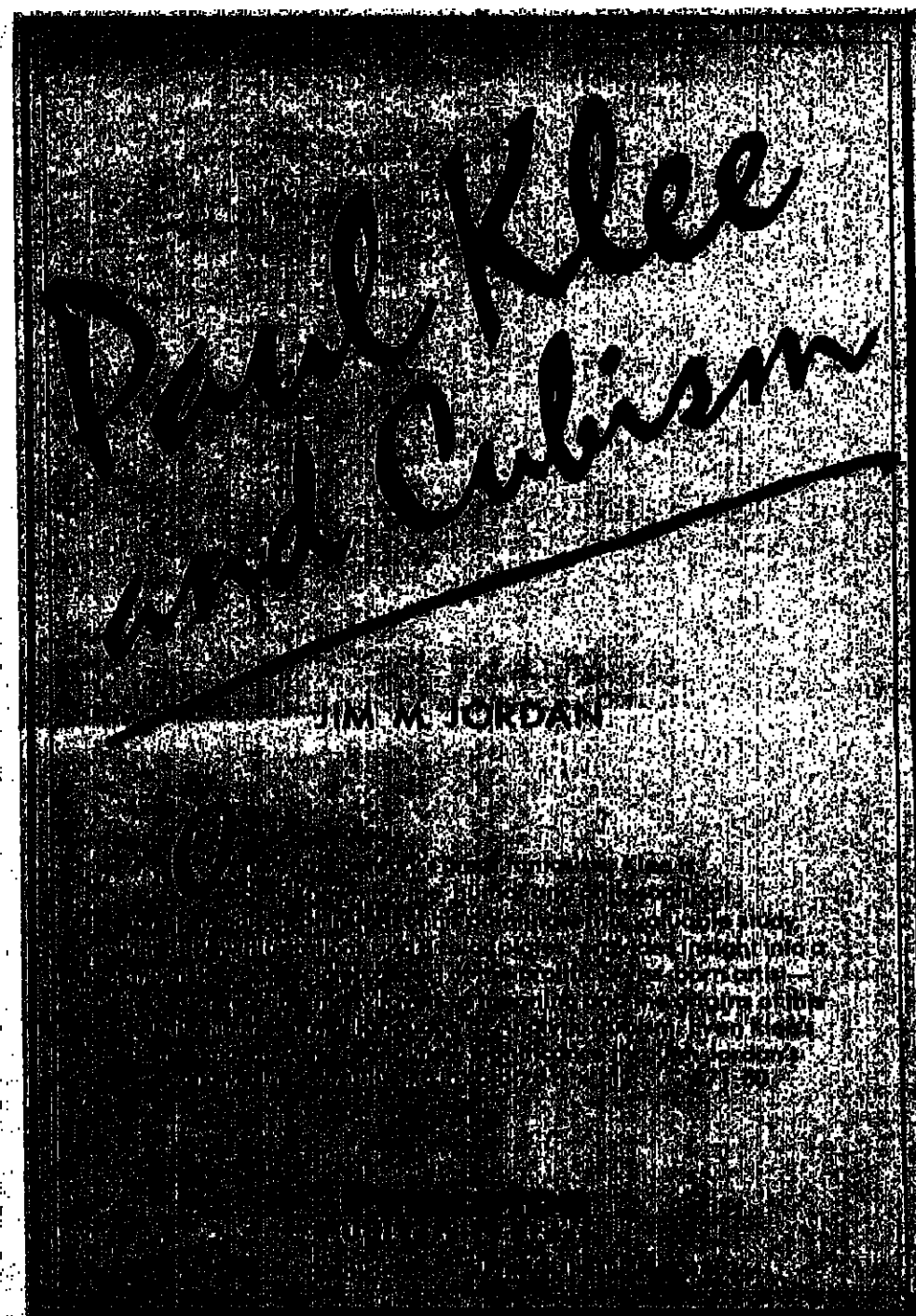
Gerald Zschorsch has also found a kind of dual vision. But his style is tougher, like the flick knife of his title. Yet if Zschorsch now poses as an intellectual hoodlum, real fighting has gone on backstage. For he belongs to the growing band of expatriate East Germans who must begin again in the West, and this has meant finding a new persona. He has done so without publicizing the struggle, and by seemingly dropping the *raison d'être* of his work. However, he has only replaced his overt political references with a more general activism.

Zschorsch's earlier books (published by Andreas Mytze's enterprising Verlag Europäische Ideen) directly reflected his experiences of repression: at seventeen, when he was put into "borstal" for one-and-a-half years after protesting over the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia; and at twenty, when he went to goal for another two-and-a-half years. His documentary prose silences the critic. His protest songs are in the best tradition of Brecht and Biermann.

Zschorsch's new volume contains the familiar mix of prose and verse, but with a new density and ambiguity. The *leitmotiv* "red" may be the party, blood, death, life, or just irresolvable; while "Hymne" recalls an anthem both political and religious. The poems are tightly compacted, often using rhyme, half-rhyme and a technique of heavily punctuated statement: full-stops break up the lines, splitting and snapping to their meanings. More than a manner, a colloquial voice acts as a switchblade to trick language into a world of heightened fact, as in "The Truth is concrete".

Ich bin. Ich war. Ich werde sein.  
 Gedicht. Text. Reim.  
 Und manchmal Bombe. Und Schuss: Der Stein zum Schluss.

(I am. I was. And I will be. / Poem. Text. Rhyme. / And sometimes bomb. And shot. And stone. The lot.)



Handwritten text in the right margin: "J.M. Jordan" and "Klee" written vertically.





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## Living by numbers

### James Kirkup

IAN BURUMA  
**A Japanese Mirror: Heroes and villains of Japanese culture**  
242pp. Cape. £9.95.  
0224 020498

In a traditional Japanese room, a doll's house-sized *psyche* stands on the tatami floor. One has to kneel before it to arrange one's hair or apply make-up. But when it is not in use, it is discreetly veiled with a piece of brocade. Ian Buruma removes that cloth and lets us take a good hard look at what lies behind.

The Japanese are the world's most self-centred people. Buruma gives several examples of this national sport of navel-contemplation, from the *Nihonjiron* ("Theory of the Japanese") books proliferating today to the almost total indifference of the Japanese government and people to the fate of the Indo-Chinese refugees washed up on their shores. He cites Japan's geographical isolation, remote and detached, laid aslant as if dissociating itself from the rest of the globe. Long periods of cultural and social isolation until the dawn of the Meiji Era also contributed to that withdrawn quality that persists even today, when despite (or perhaps because of) the ease of jet travel the Japanese are becoming less and less international and the jingoistic "We Japanese" spirit is ever stronger. The Japanese are able, as Buruma shows, to suppress their own feelings, with a single-mindedness that means "a total disregard of other people's feelings too, resulting in a kind of supreme selfishness".

Buruma relates this almost infantile egotism to myths of the creation of Japan, and in particular to the character of Susanoo, the Wind God, brother of the Sun Goddess. But Susanoo had no wish to be separated from his divine mother, and howled and screamed just like the spoilt children of Japan's over-indulgent "smothering mothers" or *kyoiku mamans* (education-mad mammas), today. Japanese

children, especially boys, are fatally indulged and pampered by their mothers, to compensate for the frequent absence of fathers on company business or salaryman drinking bouts. When these children are shoved out into the real world, the shock is traumatic, and this at least in part contributes to those modes of behaviour that to the Westerner often seem either quaint or excessive. Compared with European adults, many Japanese seem immature or lacking in seriousness.

Again and again Buruma returns to a theme in which "universal" and "unique" are contrasted. Writing of the sexual frustrations and uninhibited sexual fantasies of Japanese life, Buruma says: "Many of these fantasies are universal, but the limitless energy and the innocent openness with which the Japanese try to fulfil them is perhaps unique in the world." It is not only sex that is pursued with single-minded intensity: nearly everything, from learning the violin to assembling a car, can be said to be done by numbers: no wonder the Japanese are becoming the lords of the Computer Age. Numbers keep even the wildest fantasies under tight control, and the human being responds like a strictly-programmed cartoon robot, whether in the language lab or on the tennis-court.

*A Japanese Mirror* is cleverly arranged to lead us from the first Japanese gods and their exploits – so often reminiscent of Greek mythology – to those "heroes and villains", the gods of the present. The first part of the book is about women – the eternal mother complex, marriages of love or convenience, woman as a destructive sexual demon, Turkish bath girls and prostitutes. The final sections are about men – the samurai spirit, *yakuza*, inadequate fathers, *nihiriso* (fake-macho) feminists, and idols of the screen. In between we have an exemplary chapter on "The Third Sex" – male and female homosexuality, transvestism on stage and in the streets, the kitsch-camp of the Takarazuka Young Girls' Opera Company, the ambiguous sexuality of *bishonen* ("pretty boy") comics, intended for

adolescents but often eagerly devoured by adult males.

The various arts of *kabuki* are related to prostitution in all its ever-changing forms: "Adonis Bars" or "Host Bars" for sex-hungry housewives, where some university students earn their tuition fees; *napan* coffee-shops where the girls wear no panties but raffle their used ones to customers. The Turkish baths offer unlimited amenities, in which the man is passive, bathed and mothered by attendants dressed as nuns or schoolgirls in gym-tunics or nurses who dress their clients in nappies.

Pornography of a peculiarly witless and therefore boring kind can be found everywhere, even in vending machines on street corners. The great book centre of Kanda in Tokyo has many "Adult Book" stores, always packed with frustrated students and salarymen. Young men today are often afraid of big, mature women, so the term "Ronita Contupurekusu" has been coined for nationwide adoration of girl singers with no voice dressed in baby-doll costumes (and their male equivalents) called *aidoru* ("idols") – yet another example of the hideous abuse of English that assails the eye and the ear everywhere in Japan. As Gide said: "We wholly conquer only what we assimilate", and this is how the Japanese, notoriously poor at English, are assimilating and conquering the West. But they also have *haragei* or silent speech, which they claim no foreigner can understand: to a Westerner, they seem merely to be giving each other "old-fashioned looks", and it reminds me uncomfortably of Orwell's "bellyfeel".

"Nothing reflects less than a mirror", wrote Cocteau, and this is very true of Japanese mirrors, but never of Buruma's sharp, unsparring reflections on the underside of Japanese society, the exact opposite of Lafcadio Hearn's dreamy aestheticism, which is the way "We Japanese" would like us to see them. *A Japanese Mirror* and not the standard guide-books, is what the tourist who wants to see the real Japan – "through the looking-glass" as it were – should pack in his flight-bag.

## In the aristocratic repertoire

### Richard Widdess

ELIZABETH J. MARKHAM  
**Saibara: Japanese Court Songs of the Heian Period**  
Volume 1 (Text), 410pp. 0521 24583 4  
Volume 2 (Music), 388pp. 0521 24584 2  
Cambridge University Press. £25 each.

The student of early music who opens the second of these two volumes may well be astonished at the musical treasure-trove he discovers: fifty-six secular songs, transcribed from twelfth-century manuscripts, with parts set out in score for voice, clapper and two stringed instruments. The song-texts comprise a well-known literary genre, and there is documentary record of performances of the songs, by named performers, from as early as the year 859; indeed the score provides, for many of the songs, alternative versions, preserved in the same twelfth-century manuscripts, representing variant performance traditions. For all the songs the score shows precise rhythm and text-underlay, fully written-out ornamentation, and idiomatic writing for the stringed instruments. In a European context, any one of these features would suffice to mark the repertoire as unusually important for the history of secular music; in addition, the attractive melodic idiom, and the high degree of notated detail, would commend the songs to any ensemble specialising in the performance of medieval music.

In fact, the songs in question were composed and sung not in Paris or Provence, but at the Heian court of Japan (782-1184). *Saibara* denotes a genre of refined, elegant and (as it turns out) melodious Japanese court song, performed for entertainment by noble amateurs – such as the famed but fictional Prince Genji. Six of the songs are still sung today. In her historical study of *Saibara*, the first in English, Elizabeth J. Markham achieves two previously unattained objectives: she reconstructs and publishes the melodic lines to which the songs were

sung in Heian times, using the earliest sources available; and she demonstrates the processes of musical change that have rendered the six surviving songs almost unrecognizable as they are performed today. She incidentally demonstrates – as her teacher Laurence Picken has already shown in his *Music from the Tang Court* (1981) – that the archives of Japan are burgeoning with historical musical documents. This fact has yet to be appreciated by the majority of Western musicologists.

Dr Markham's first volume is an exemplary exercise in rigorous scholarly detective-work. In interpreting tablatures for lute (*biwa*) and zither (*gaku-so*), and reconstructing vocal parts with the help of singers' text-copies, she accepts the hypothesis first proposed by Dr Picken, that the speed of performance 800 years ago was much faster than today. Her transcriptions support, indeed confirm the hypothesis, for not only are they entirely convincing as music at the speed proposed, but they also show, for the first time, the close similarity between *Saibara* and certain melodies of the contemporary instrumental repertoires – *Togaku* ("Chinese") music and *Konjaku* ("Korean") music. This sharing of melodies between instrumental and vocal repertoires of supposedly different origins is clearly indicated in the Japanese sources, but no scholar, Japanese or Western, has previously been able to demonstrate it, for the relationship only fully emerges when all the sources are interpreted according to the "Picken hypothesis".

In the course of Markham's study, it becomes increasingly evident that the compiler of the instrument part-books, Fujiwara no Moronaga (1137-1192), ranks among the greatest of medieval music-scholars: for his part-books are nothing less than a comprehensive and critical edition of the twelfth-century court-music repertoire. His alternative versions and countless variant readings – many of them attributed to named manuscripts or performers – give a vivid picture of a living, orally-transmitted performance tradition, and provide fascinating evidence for the processes by which such a

tradition is reduced to writing. Students of plainsong and medieval European secular monody should take note of this important parallel.

The last and longest chapter examines in detail the relationship between the twelfth-century versions and modern performance practice (how many studies of medieval European music are able to show any continuity between then and now?). Markham discovers that the manifold reduction in tempo has resulted in an efflorescence of majestic melismas in the vocal line, under the influence of extraneous chant, such that these originally exuberant features have now become "the melody". The modal and rhythmic structures have also become distorted. While these complex and remarkable musical changes are clearly demonstrated, it is perhaps here that one misses most a sense of the cultural background to the tradition. On the penultimate page, for example, one learns that "the performing tradition of *Saibara* is reported to have been lost completely between the early sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries"; one would like to know by whom, and in what circumstances, the tradition was lost and, a century later, reconstructed. To say this, however, is not so much a criticism of the present book, as a suggestion for the next. Markham amply demonstrates, in her final chapter, the truth of Jonathan Condit's statement (originally made with reference to Korean music) that "in cultures relying on aural transmission of music, a piece can undoubtedly be preserved in the performing repertoire for a period of several centuries, but the assumption that a piece has remained unchanged for such a period should be viewed with skepticism".

*Saibara* is photographically reproduced from the author's beautifully-prepared typescript and music manuscript. One hopes that libraries will appreciate the importance of a book that, because it deals with non-Western music, would not normally come to the attention of the wider musical readership that it eminently deserves.

## Defence and deterrence

### Philip Towle

PAUL BRACKEN  
**The Command and Control of Nuclear Forces**  
252pp. Yale University Press. £14.95.  
0300 02946 2

MICHAEL SHEEHAN  
**The Arms Race**  
242pp. Oxford: Martin Robertson. £16.50 (paperback, £5.95).  
085520 630 6

MICHAEL HOWARD  
**Nuclear Weapons and the Preservation of Peace**  
15pp. Liverpool University Press. Paperback, £1.  
085323 005 6  
DAVID MARTIN and PETER MULLEN (Editors)  
**Unholy Warfare: The Church and the Bomb**  
247pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £12.50.

0631 13454 9  
MICHAEL MANDELBAUM  
**The Nuclear Future**  
131pp. Cornell University Press. £17.  
08014 1619 1

From Alexander Solzhenitsyn to Robert McNamara, from General Bernard Rogers to Joan Ruddock the cry goes out that we should emphasize our conventional forces at the expense of our nuclear weapons. Have we then reached another stage in the process by which nuclear weapons have gradually been edged off the centre of the military stage? Up until the Korean War there was a probability that such weapons would be used in any major conflict in which a state possessing them was involved. But they were not used in Korea even when United Nations forces were being defeated. Paul Bracken in *The Command and Control of Nuclear Forces* argues that this may have been partly due to chance: they were simply not available at the appropriate time and place. Nevertheless Korea was a portent; the Great Powers have become steadily less likely to use nuclear weapons unless their vital interests, and perhaps their national survival, were at stake. Western military strategy has moved from "massive retaliation" to "flexible response", thus pushing nuclear weapons out of the front line; and those who argue for a "no first use" declaration, for massive increases in Western conventional forces or for removing tactical nuclear weapons from Europe, hope to push this process further in the same direction.

The tendency in much recent writing about strategy is accordingly to assume that anything which emphasizes the conventional element at the expense of the nuclear must be desirable. Commenting on the possible cancellation of the American B1 strategic bomber, Michael Sheehan in *The Arms Race* argues "there is no doubt that such a move would be immensely valuable. America's [conventional] forces, despite the huge amounts spent on them, suffer from many weaknesses." Similarly he opposes the purchase of Trident submarines by Britain since "weaker British forces would give way faster on the European central front, forcing decision makers to 'go nuclear' even sooner". And in his Eleanor Rathbone Memorial Lecture Michael Howard contends: "as for the Europeans, our first requirement is to ensure that our conventional defences are strong enough to deter the Soviet Union from contemplating attack even if she did not fear retaliation with nuclear weapons, and to cease to rely for our safety on a threat which, if ever it came to the point, we would almost certainly never dare to implement."

Some of the contributors to *Unholy Warfare* would agree with this analysis, if they were not against all weapons of any sort. Tony Benn apparently believes that nuclear weapons make war more likely though he does not explain why, and E. P. Thompson naturally condemns any reliance upon nuclear weapons. However, Sir Neville Mott argues that "if Europe is to be defended, planning must be for conventional defence, but... NATO should keep a substantial deterrent, to be used only if the other side crosses the nuclear divide". Against this Sir Hugh Beach points out that it is most unlikely that the Europeans will spend much more on their conventional forces and that even if they did, the Soviets could easily increase their forces to match.

On the other hand it might be false to assert, as some do, that a conventional war between

East and West would necessarily be more destructive than the Second World War. It might indeed be so but it is by no means certain. Modern warfare is increasingly a battle between rival technologies with fewer and fewer men in the front line. Weapons are becoming more accurate, though it is also fair to say that certain types of weapons, such as fuel-air explosives, are becoming ever more devastating. The present popularity of defence over deterrence, of conventional forces over nuclear is nevertheless surprising. Deterrence was first espoused by British governments of the 1930s, partly because of the horrific memories of the First World War and partly because the development of bombers promised to make future wars even less attractive, particularly to civilians. Deterrence is in fact the strategy of a profoundly pacifist population.

The central issue, however, is not whether conventional war would be destructive but whether it would lead to a full-scale nuclear exchange. The heart of much of the recent debate is the question whether by changing to a more conventional strategy we increase the risks that an East-West war might break out, without reducing the risk that it would end in nuclear disaster. The paradox is that many of those who profess to be particularly concerned about the instability or immorality of deterrence often implicitly assume that it would continue to preserve the peace even if it were made radically less effective by "no first use" declarations or by massive one-sided reductions in nuclear forces. Conversely those (like this reviewer) who believe that deterrence has been a great stabilizing influence since 1945 often oppose anything which might weaken the strategy in however small a way. On the side of

caution we can argue that contemporary strategists have a duty to be conservative. The onus must be on the reformers to prove that any change will not be destabilizing.

Those who argue for reduced reliance upon deterrence tend to believe that the situation is becoming ever more dangerous, that the arms race is "out of control". Michael Sheehan's wide-ranging and dispassionate description of *The Arms Race* provides some material for assessing the alarmists' contentions. Sheehan demolishes the frequently heard argument that all arms races end in war, although he is slightly more inclined than I am to accept the idea that we are in the middle of such a race. He asserts, for example, that "the real acceleration in the strategic nuclear arms build-up has occurred since 1960". In terms of missiles and missile warheads this is of course true, but in terms of nuclear destructive power, of "throw weight" in the strategists' jargon, Western power has been reduced as the bombers have been phased out. Taken as a whole, the period since the Korean War has seen a steady fall in the number of tanks, aircraft, ships and men in uniform in the forces of the Great Powers. The arms race, if there is one, is in the technical complexity and cost of the weapons and in the level of training of the forces which man them. Hence the paradox that senior officers bemoan the erosion in the size of their forces, while critics attack the "waste of resources" on military expenditure.

Over the past few years Michael Mandelbaum has become one of the most respected historians of the nuclear era. In *The Nuclear Future* he argues that the present protest movements are a result of the Reagan administration's policy and more generally of a collapse of

faith in the "nuclear priesthood", those in strategic institutes and ministries of defence who have been thinking about nuclear problems since 1945. In the long run, he believes, the "peace" movements will decline and "the nuclear future will be like the past. It will follow a middle path between nuclear war and nuclear disarmament. There will continue to be nuclear weapons but they will not be used."

Paul Bracken's fascinating and disturbing study of *The Command and Control of Nuclear Forces* is less optimistic. Bracken believes that insufficient attention has been devoted to the management of nuclear forces in crises between the Great Powers. He argues that the arms control negotiations should be designed to enhance stability in such crises. The right to place Soviet Yankee Class submarines off the coast of the United States or Western Pershing 2 missiles in West Germany should be barred away because these deployments threaten national command centres and thus reduce the time available for governments to take calm and rational decisions. The United States should declare unilaterally that it would not attack Soviet command centres in wartime and it should offer help and advice to the Kremlin whenever it perceives inadequacies in the control of Soviet nuclear forces. Whatever the merits of Bracken's individual recommendations, his proposal that we should concentrate on improving "crisis stability" could achieve a degree of consensus which efforts to push nuclear weapons ever further from the centre of the military stage cannot do, given the fears that these might weaken deterrence and foster the delusion that such weapons would definitely not be used in a full-scale East-West war.

## On the other side

### Michael Carver

ANDREW COCKBURN  
**The Threat: Inside the Soviet Military Machine**  
338pp. Hutchinson. £9.95.  
009 151290 5  
VIKTOR SUVOROV  
**Inside the Soviet Army**  
296pp. Hamish Hamilton. £9.95.  
0241 10889 6

The reader who seeks the truth about just how serious is the threat from the large armed forces of the Soviet Union to the security of the capitalist West will be as confused, after reading these two books, as he probably was before.

Andrew Cockburn at least has a clear idea of the message he wishes to put across. It is, first, that the Soviet armed forces are riddled with inefficiencies of every kind; and, second, that they and the armed forces of the United States and her allies are engaged in a conspiracy of exaggerating the threat from each other in order to justify the maintenance and improvement of the existing levels of armed strength. The sources from which he derives the evidence for these assertions include Viktor Suvorov's previous book *The Liberators* (which had as its subtitle the title of his new volume), from which Cockburn quotes extensively. Soviet citizens who have left their country and now live in the US are another favourite source. Contacts with the intelligence world, including informants who have retired from it, with the military in general, perusal of military literature and a keen nose for any scrap of information that can lend support to his argument, are all brought into play.

One of Cockburn's most persistent themes is that the technological competition between the two superpowers, far from enhancing the efficiency of their forces, reduces it, particularly in the case of the Soviet Union. He maintains that modern equipments are much less reliable than their less sophisticated predecessors, and quotes the American M1 and Soviet T64 tanks as especially bad examples. In this argument, he fails to make allowance for the fact that all new equipments have teething troubles, which are ironed out when they have been in service for some time.

As an example of the effect one side's equipment programme has on the other, Cockburn

quotes Herbert York, who held important posts in the Pentagon connected with the development of the US strategic nuclear weapon arsenal:

The Russians today have a strategic force of roughly 2400 missiles and bombers. The reason they have that many is because that is the number we planned to build in the early 1960s, when our present force was laid down, and they have simply copied it. The reason we decided on that number at that time was because we were changing over from a strategic force (composed purely) of bombers, and we couldn't have proposed to replace it with anything smaller. The reason we had [that number of] nuclear bombers in the 1950s was because the force had been based on the number of bombers we had for attacking the enemy in World War II. That number had been determined by the number of planes we could build in the war years, the number of crews we could train in that time, the number of airfields we could maintain overseas, and so on. It does not seem such a rational basis for planning Soviet strategic forces.

If Cockburn's book is to be believed, similar reasons lie behind most of the military planning of both superpowers.

No such clear message emerges from the new book by the author who goes by the pseudonym of Viktor Suvorov. The last part of it echoes the message which he broadcast so vividly and wittily in *The Liberators*: that the Soviet armed forces are afflicted with the same diseases that corrupt the whole Soviet system, deriving from the unholy triangle at the top. There, the Party, the Army and the KGB do not trust each other for one moment. Two of them will always combine to see that the third does not gain excessive power. Because merit cannot be rewarded, advancement depends on flattery of one's superiors and concealment not only of one's own mistakes but also of those of one's subordinates. This is a major source of inefficiency and corruption, which applies across the board: to generals, to all areas of the equipment procurement and maintenance system, to training, supply and administration of every kind, including discipline.

*The Liberators* depicted the Soviet Army as a drunken, discontented rabble, in which all ranks are up to every old soldier's trick of cheating superiors and taking advantage of their comrades. Suvorov's new book reflects this in a minor key; but most of it is taken up with a standard description of the organization of the Soviet armed forces. The picture that he paints is a very different one: of huge forces, lavishly equipped, organized, and trained, to implement an offensive strategy designed to

overrun Western Europe. Concealment of the real intentions of the Soviet Union is directed by the Chief Directorate of Strategic Deception, which was formerly headed by the present Chief of the General Staff, Marshal Ogarkov. According to Suvorov, every act and word of all Soviet officials is influenced by this deception plan. All their international sportsmen and women are members of their special forces.

The overall conclusion that emerges from Suvorov's book is a confused one, which does not support Cockburn's. Cockburn may perhaps suspect that Suvorov, who has been lecturing to the US armed forces about the Soviet army, has become infected by his own desire to ensure that the Soviet threat is taken seriously. It could be that Suvorov realized that too ready an acceptance by people like Cockburn of the picture painted in *The Liberators* distorted the truth, and detracted from the principal message that he had wanted to convey: that the Soviet system was inhuman, corrupt and inefficient, and must be prevented from extending its power and influence over other countries.

Where does the truth lie? There is no doubt that there is a strong element of truth in much of Cockburn's accusation. The game of "You scratch my throat, I'll scratch yours" is well known in Nato intelligence circles. It has undoubtedly contributed to the arms race. In terms both of quantity and of quality, if that is synonymous with technological development, it is also true that the efficiency and readiness for combat of the Soviet forces has been exaggerated. They are not ten feet tall. Nevertheless the sheer size of those forces and their reserves, the length of conscript service, the toughness of their human material, the single-minded, relentless determination of the Soviet system, and the devotion of their armed forces to the doctrine of an offensive strategy, all add up to a significant military capability which, in spite of all its possible internal weaknesses, does pose a serious threat, to belittle which, as Cockburn does, smacks of dangerous complacency.

However, the threat is not so overwhelming that it is impossible for Nato to provide a conventional force adequate to meet it. It does not justify the attitude of despair which puts its trust in initiating nuclear war in order to counter it.



# Islam's champion

## Jonathan Sumption

P. H. NEWBY  
*Saladin in His Time*  
 210pp. Faber. £10.95.  
 0571 130445  
 RONALD C. FINUCANE  
*Soldiers of the Faith: Crusaders and Moslems at War*  
 247pp. Dent. £12.50.  
 0460 120409

Saladin was the archetypal virtuous pagan of medieval literature, a man whose qualities of courage and largesse made him an honorary European if not an honorary Christian. Dante found him in Limbo with those other pagan heroes, Hector, Aeneas and Caesar, but "seen on his own, standing apart".

He was an outsider even in Muslim terms. His family came from a Kurdish tribe of Armenia, a people of dwindling importance in Near Eastern politics, who had been overwhelmed by the Saljuk Turks during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Saladin's father and grandfather and his uncles had all uprooted themselves, making their careers in the service of Saljuk princes. They made their own way, as Saladin was to do more spectacularly after them.

The principal Islamic state of the Near East in Saladin's youth was the Syrian principality of Nur al-Din with its capital at Damascus. Damascus was an important spiritual centre, the great rampart of Sunni orthodoxy against the infidel Franks and the heretical Shi'ites of Fatimid Egypt. Nur al-Din had made use of this Islamic enthusiasm, in some ways the mirror image of the crusading impulse in Christian Europe, to build his state and wage holy war against the Frankish enemy. The unevenness of the results was due to the limits of his resources of manpower and money, and to the divisions of the Islamic Near East, which left the Christian kings of Jerusalem holding the balance between Egypt and Syria. Saladin owes his historical fame to his success in solving, at least temporarily, both of these problems. His intelligence and charm would have been forgotten otherwise.

It was not an outcome which anyone could have predicted. In the late 1160s, Nur al-Din sent Shirkuh, one of Saladin's uncles, to make trouble in Egypt by intervening in the perpetual factional strife which marked the last years of the Fatimid caliphate. In 1169 Shirkuh made himself vizier, and when he died within a few weeks of taking office Saladin, who was with him, succeeded. In 1171 Saladin removed his nominal master, the Caliph, and brought Egypt officially back to the Sunni fold loyal to the Caliphate of Baghdad. Initially his government had no other foundation than the well-bought support of the Kurds and Turks of the expeditionary army in Egypt.

Military power alone was no guarantee of permanence and much of Saladin's career after 1171 is a prolonged campaign to set his rule on a more solid basis. He succeeded Nur al-Din as the main champion of Islam against the European intruders and then, two years after Nur al-Din's death in 1174, to his position as ruler of Damascus and Syria. The two were connected. Saladin justified himself to his subjects, and to those whom he hoped would become his subjects, by the service which he did to Islam in prosecuting the holy war.

Pious conviction and political calculation entered into Saladin's policy in proportions which every biographer has tried vainly to discover. The difficulty lies in penetrating behind the propaganda, the eulogies of some of his contemporaries and the malicious perversions of others. Even tried al-Din, Saladin's secretary, although well informed and surprisingly objective, is becomingly discreet at awkward moments. This is the problem of all medieval biography, Islamic as well as Christian. There is no utter between Caesar and Louis XI of France whose thoughts can be known in any detail. Saladin is no exception.

P. H. Newby is judiciously silent on this and other questions which cannot be answered. What he has written is a well-constructed and readable narrative of Saladin's life based on all the Arabic sources which were readily available which added to the material in the West. For

thoroughness and analytical perception his work does not approach that of Lyons and Jackson (published, I would guess, after Mr Newby's researches had been completed). But for those who are deterred by that austere and indigestible work, this is the book.

The emphasis is naturally on the last decade of Saladin's life, the period for which the sources are fullest and the one in which Saladin came close to fulfilling his ambition to drive the Franks into the sea. The Franks themselves knew what had changed:

In former times every [Muslim] city had its own ruler . . . To contend in battle against adversaries of widely differing and frequently conflicting ideas, adversaries who distrusted each other, involved less peril . . . But now, God has so willed it, all the kingdoms adjacent to us have been brought under one man . . . This Saladin, a man of humble antecedents and low station now holds under his control all these kingdoms.

The words (quoted by Newby) belong to the great Latin chronicler William of Tyre.

The conquest of Egypt in the 1170s by a Syrian (or rather an adoptive Syrian) not only transformed the strategic situation but gave the traditional enemies of the Franks access to the great wealth of the Nile valley. Saladin, although personally uncorrupt, was a bad financial administrator and did not make as much of this advantage as he might have done. Even so, he was able to field larger armies for longer periods than any previous Islamic champions. About half the army which decisively defeated the Franks at the Horns of Hattin in 1187 and destroyed the kingdom of Jerusalem, had come from Egypt.

In the end Saladin was too successful. Having all but eliminated the Franks of Palestine he provoked a counter-attack in the shape of the Third Crusade, the most successful of all the crusades after the first. When Saladin died in 1193 the Franks had not succeeded in their main objective of recovering Jerusalem, but they were back in possession of the coastal towns which had been the backbone of the old kingdom of Jerusalem in every sense other than the spiritual one. Moreover they had conquered Cyprus, a secure base which enabled a Christian presence to survive in the Near East for three centuries – or four if the Venetians be counted as Christians.

Ronald Finucane expresses in his introduction the hope that *Soldiers of the Faith* "will fill the gap between scholarly monographs and popular expositions". This is perhaps a surprising ambition, for crusading studies are the only area of medieval history where there is no such gap. Serious scholars like Runciman and Mayer have found it possible to write histories which are written in (or translated into) good English, approachable by non-specialists, and read by them in large numbers. Still, Mr Finucane's own contribution is welcome evidence that the tradition is still alive.

His purpose is to describe the organization of the crusading wars and to convey some impression of what it must have been like to fight in them. He does this primarily from the Christian point of view but there is an occasional foray into the less familiar territory on the other side.

Although the result is colourful and entertaining, his method, which involves piling illustration upon example over a period which covers four centuries, sometimes gives the impression that nothing much changed during that period and that crusading experience was uniform. This is obviously not what Finucane means to convey. The early crusades were more or less spontaneous outbursts of militant religious enthusiasm which produced huge armies consisting mainly of untrained peasants. After the middle of the twelfth century there was a deliberate attempt to exclude these extra of doubtful military value, an attempt which transformed the reality of crusading and removed much although obviously not all of its idealism. Crusading armies of the thirteenth century consisted of professional soldiers, generally under the command of their own rulers, with a relatively well developed hierarchy of command. Apart from the climate, the experience of fighting in such armies cannot have differed much from the more familiar experience of soldiers in Western Europe. Crusading warfare had distinctive features in the twelfth century. Thereafter it was just war.

Finucane's book is a well-constructed and readable narrative of Saladin's life based on all the Arabic sources which were readily available which added to the material in the West. For thoroughness and analytical perception his work does not approach that of Lyons and Jackson (published, I would guess, after Mr Newby's researches had been completed). But for those who are deterred by that austere and indigestible work, this is the book.

# Coping with gunpowder

## John Keegan

J. R. HALE  
*Renaissance War Studies*  
 524pp. Hambledon Press. £28.  
 0907628 028

The Renaissance was a "moment of change" as much in military as in other things. Indeed, some argue that the coming of the Renaissance was chiefly a function of military process – some long-laid and slow, like the decline of the feudal army, some recent and rapid, like the appearance of cast-metal, mobile cannon. The former is supposed to have released rulers from dependence for armed support against their enemies on the goodwill of their bovine barony, the latter to have made barons who took to arms against their rulers the target of a sudden and severe squelch. The combined effects were to concentrate power at the centre, whence it could be deployed to raise taxes for hiring professional soldiers, fortifying frontiers, beautifying cities, patronizing poets and painters, investing in fleets and trade-goods and so priming the pump of cash circulation over again.



"Ritratto d'uomo d'armi con lo scudiero" by Giorgione, reproduced from Einaudi's *Storia dell'arte italiana*, volume 5. Dal medioevo al quattrocento (623p. Turin: Einaudi. L. 115000 8806 050702).

It is, of course, too neat an explanation to fit the phenomena. But it at least has the merit of directing attention to an understudied subject, which is the range, rate and nature of military change in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Professional military historians are incurably modernist. Medievalists are driven by the bellicosity of their fauna into the wastelands of the battlefield. The period which intervenes is very little visited by historians. But what it lacks in quantity is made up in quality. Michael Roberts's study of "the military revolution" in northern Europe is a landmark. Geoffrey Parker's *Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road* illuminates the mechanism of Habsburg imperial control via the rarely tackled approach of logistics and military administration. Michael Mallet's *Mercenaries and Their Masters* demolishes persistent myths – particularly that of the bloodless of condottieri combat – and replaces them with a new understanding of the nature of hired armies.

The Professor of Italian at London University is an unlikely recruit to this small but select band. Yet not only has he made the military history of the Renaissance one of his chief interests, he has also been hard at work in the field for so long that "recruit" is a slur on his standing. In this collection of related essays on the subject he has out. The earliest, on "War and Public Opinion in Renaissance Italy", was published as far back as 1960; the most recent, on "Tudor Fortification", appeared last year. Together they represent the scope of a wide but remarkably congruent approach to Renaissance warfare, which concentrates on three essentials: the effect of warfare on the military class in the Renaissance period; the economic and political ramifications of the new artillery fortification in Renaissance states. Fortification, designed to deny access to places of light and learning, might seem an odd subject for a military historian. But

as Christopher Duffy has shown in his important book, *Siege Warfare*, fortification played a key role in Renaissance statecraft. The rise of mobile artillery undoubtedly undercut the power of vassals to defy their sovereigns. It temporarily favoured the rise of kings rich enough to buy artillery parks, and so precipitated the solidification of the dynastic states. Thanks to the ingenuity of the Renaissance mind, however – Leonardo chose to insist on his talents as a fortification engineer before his reputation as a painter – an antidote to mobile artillery was swiftly found. It lay in the logic of geometry and revealed itself in the ground-hugging polygons which resisted artillery as towering walls could not. The resulting advantage was largely enjoyed by the big states, and so might have hurried forward the onset of absolutism. But an indirect effect was to preserve the independence of those few states – notably Venice in the south, the Netherlands in the north – where civic values flourished and which also had trading revenues large enough to meet the enormous capital costs of the new architecture.

Fortification could thus be a bastion of liberty, which is one of Professor Hale's points. He has numbers of others, as befits a pioneer of fortification studies, of which a general comment, one particular, one general: the particular, that the crucial bastion feature was offensive in function, is contentious – "counter-offensive" would define it better; the general, that fortification could be oppressive quite as often as defensive of liberty, is so fertile a concept as to demand pages rather than paragraphs for discussion. His two essays on the subject show that it exercised the citizens of Florence in practice as keenly as Machiavelli in contemporary theory – and if that does not stimulate a research student towards a dissertation, what will?

Free citizens feared fortification – or, to be precise, its "citadel" element – because it armoured tyrants against revolution. Yet the general effect of military change in Hale's chosen period was to alleviate the burden of warriorism on society. War had become more complex with the onset of gunpowder, demanding a new sort of military leader. The mounted man-at-arms, a prima donna, was quite out of place on a battlefield where success required the co-operation of several arms. But the mercenary officer, though adaptable, had made himself politically suspect. He travelled too easily between employers, whom he – as with the *Storzas* – was prepared to supplant if the chance offered. The resulting dilemma – it is endemic, though the reverend seigniors of the Renaissance could not know that – was thought best resolved by instituting a system of military education. It was to be aimed at the youth of the aristocratic class: its purpose to civilize the overbearing and reclaim to responsibility the wastrels. The essays in the collection on the efforts made towards those ends in England, Italy and Germany are of great originality. At the same time, they stimulate starts of recognition in anyone concerned with military education today. The aim of modern military academies is to produce efficient yet obedient military servants of the state. It is exactly that aim which the founders of Renaissance military academies espoused.

A burning contemporary issue which would also reverberate in modern minds was the morality of the new warfare of gunpowder and firearms. "The just war" was an idea expounded by Aquinas; but it was the energy of Reformation and Counter-Reformation thought which ramified and disseminated it. Men,ching side by side with religious was secular thought, whether juridical or merely humanistic, in either case exercised and alarmed by the growing ease with which men killed each other, particularly in the impersonal and distant way which gunpowder made possible. It was a development which part of the public mind of the Renaissance deplored. But another part, intrigued and excited by this revelation of power, was ready to accommodate and even endorse it. "Optimistic students of human nature", Professor Hale concludes, "can take little comfort from the reactions of their Renaissance ancestors to the greatest challenge to Europe's conscience offered by military technology before the atom bomb".

# Strategies of attrition

## Hew Strachan

JEFFERY WILLIAMS  
*Byng of Vimy: General and Governor General*  
 399pp. Leo Cooper/Secker and Warburg.  
 £15.95.  
 0436571102  
 ANTHONY BABINGTON  
*For the Sake of Example: Capital Courts-Martial 1914-1920*  
 238pp. Leo Cooper/Secker and Warburg.  
 £8.95.  
 0436030500  
 JOHN TERRAINE  
*The First World War 1914-1918*  
 195pp. Leo Cooper/Secker and Warburg.  
 £9.95.  
 0436517302

On May 22, 1915, Julian Byng – then commanding the Cavalry Corps in France – wrote to R. D. Blumenfeld, "Evidently the only way to end this war is to kill Boches, consequently every Boche-killer sent to the Dardanelles is a man wasted." Byng's was an early formulation of what came to be called the strategy of attrition. A year and a half later, as the Somme battle drew to its close, Byng defined the strategy more clearly: "continued, persistent determined wearing away of the German strength" is "the surest quickest road to victory".

Before 1914 commanders had looked for decisive battlefield success on the Napoleonic model. During the First World War they reluctantly recognized that the tactical and technological conditions of trench warfare rendered the traditional means to victory inappropriate. But, as far as the British were concerned, the implications of attrition were never welded into a coherent grand strategy. Plans to fight attrition battles were fatally compromised by a lingering hope that a breakthrough might be achieved and a decisive victory follow. It was this intellectual difficulty that lay at the bottom of so much alleged incompetence in generalship on the Western front.

Byng's career illustrates the problem, while at the same time revealing how inappropriate are the traditional jibes levelled against the Great War commanders. The youngest son of an impoverished aristocratic family, he had charged with the 10th Hussars at El Teb in 1884. Despite his patrician origins (or, perhaps, because of them) he was a remarkably unstuffy, unpompous and unpatronizing man. As a divisional and corps commander, he regularly visited the forward trenches; he remained close to his troops, conscientiously sparing luxuries to which they could not enjoy access. Although a cavalryman, he embraced the new technologies of the Great War with enthusiasm. The tank battle of Cambrai was planned under his command, and included provision for interdiction bombing by the Royal Flying Corps. But Cambrai also illustrates the strategic dilemma. The battle's primary purpose was limited, to draw German reserves away from Ypres. Its success encouraged Haig to expand its objectives: he did not want another "wasting fight" and so would not provide reserves, but he did hope that the cavalry might find the path open to cross the St Quentin canal. The purpose of the battle became confused. Caught on an indefensible trench line, Byng's 3rd Army was the victim of a German counter-attack on November 30, 1917. As Byng had shown at Vimy in April, he could prepare and execute a limited attack with devastating effect: what was lacking was the framework within which such successes contributed to the strategy of attrition.

Byng was a decent, competent man, as Jeffery Williams's biography makes clear. He left no private papers, and therefore many fascinating issues relating to his early life – the ill-will between him and General Gough, Byng's editorship of *The Cavalry Journal* in a period of acute controversy for the mounted arm – are left undeveloped. But these disappointments are brushed aside as Byng's importance grows. The book's momentum increases as other archives begin to contain more on his subject's views and character. The problem of sources also confronts Anthony Babington, in his well-written and disturbing account of capital courts-martial in

the British army. Courts-martial did little to seek information on the backgrounds of those appearing before them: their records reflect this deficiency. Moreover Judge Babington is rightly anxious to protect the relatives of those concerned, and therefore reveals neither names nor units. Consequently many conclusions must, at least for the moment, be ducked. What sort of social background did these men come from? What areas of Britain? Did some regiments have a better record than others? Only three officers were executed. Were they judged by different standards or did their training and social background confer a greater sense of responsibility?

The executions do have one clear feature: 266 of a total of 346 were punishments for desertion, and all but a few offences were committed in France and Belgium, especially in the years 1916 and 1917. The British army, unlike those of France and Russia, escaped serious mutiny: only three executions were for this offence. Instead its soldiers manifested their strains by fleeing the battlefield. Desertion was a reaction to a military problem, not a civil crime. The army had expanded too rapidly for the quality of its training or of its officers to be unaffected. The strategy of attrition imposed novel tactical conditions, for which the familiar training methods were inadequate, and generated a demand for manpower which overwhelmed the selection criteria of the medical boards. The pulverizing military conditions of the strategy simply strained some men too much. The purpose of the death penalty, in the view of one corps commander, was "to make

such men fear running away more than they fear the enemy". Imprisonment was no punishment, when it conferred security from the battlefield. The death penalty was summary, and above all exemplary.

The response to the consequent legal criticisms was to defend the sentences as the products of these military necessities. Justice was dispensed on the grounds of military utility: the choice was whether the condemned man could ever be a good soldier or whether his execution would stiffen the resolve of others. His rights as a citizen were swamped by the immediate imperatives, and his innocence of any civil crime never properly faced. The officers serving on the field general courts-martial were conscious of military pressures, particularly from their seniors, and – at least until 1916-17 – had inadequate legal advice. They frequently gave insufficient attention to the medical history of the accused. Wounded men bore psychological, as well as physical, scars. The diagnosis of nervous conditions, inadequately lumped together as "shell shock", was arbitrary and subjective. Medical officers were looking for malingerers, not considering the predisposition of some to a lower breaking-point than others. They were slow to observe that the effects of trench combat were cumulative: the deserter was as often a long-serving pre-war regular or reservist, with a good combat record, as he was an immature and inadequately trained conscript.

The villains of Babington's book are traditional. His generals are the incompetent, uncaring caricatures which Williams demon-

industrial infrastructure, modern communications equipment and artillery; its officers were poorly trained and the men's morale uncertain.

Despite this, Russia's leaders helped to unleash Armageddon during that peaceful summer. Then as now, deterrence was the guiding concept: partial mobilization was expected to prevent Austria from attacking Serbia. It did not. When Austria declared war on the Serbs the politicians in St Petersburg yielded to the generals, who insisted on a general mobilization that threatened Germany. Poor Nicholas temporized, sending plaintive and ill-considered telegrams to his cousin Wilhelm, while the mercurial Sazonov ("one really does not know where one is with M. Sazonov", Sir Arthur Nicolson minuted) sided with the service ministers. Concealing the bitter truth, they assured the Tsar that the armed forces were ready. True, Russia did urge the Serbs to make concessions, but her efforts at mediation were half-hearted and their credibility weakened by the readiness to use force – and in an offensive mode at that. "The need to defend our dignity as a great power", wrote quarter-master-general Yu. N. Danilov later, "did not let us face the foe on our own soil." Dr Lieven does not quote this particular observation, but he notes justly that the generals ought to have pursued a wholly defensive strategy, at least until their armies were at full strength. Instead they blundered on to Tannenberg. The decision-making process was hampered by major institutional shortcomings. The Council of Ministers met only once during the crisis, and the Duma not at all – although, as Lieven points out, its counsel might have been less helpful than that of the much-criticized backstairs advisers at court.

This book is less concerned with the July crisis itself than with the historical background from 1907 onward. Lieven has studied Russia's official establishment closely and provides an excellent analysis of the views held in various quarters, although since so few persons were asked for their opinion when the showdown came one wonders how much all this really matters. Fair-minded to a fault, he finds some good in everyone and at times comes close to making excuses for ignorance or folly. The intriguing parallels with later situations are only hinted at here. In 1939 Stalin tried the Durnovo solution, only to discover that Hitler, alas, was not Wilhelm II. Today the Kremlin has fewer diplomatic options. This increases the dangers, for if Russia's road to and from Sarajevo teaches anything, it is that men under severe stress do not always act rationally or prudently.

strates to be so inappropriate. In particular, they form no part of John Terraine's interpretation of the war. Increasingly, Terraine's books have sought to vindicate the strategy of attrition, arguing that through it the British army – under Haig's command – caused the German collapse in 1918. *The First World War* is an early, low-key, and very readable example of the genre, having been first published in 1965. The 1983 edition is shorn of the many superb photographs which gave the 1965 edition much of its attractiveness. Instead it has an introduction in which Terraine is disarmingly honest about his work: "in all my studies of the war I have tried to reduce its vast complexities to some kind of comprehensible simplicities." The trouble is that, while his simplifications do contain truths, they also produce distortions. As the years have gone by the ideas have become more finely honed and Terraine's Great War, whatever his protestations, is Britain's Great War: in a six-page chapter on the war's causes, the reactions of Berlin and Vienna are glossed over, while those of London are accorded five pages; fifteen pages are devoted to Gallipoli, two lines to the Bolshevik seizure of power. If the case for the success of the British army's campaign of attrition is to be made, it needs to be set in a wider context than this.

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# Storms over the South Atlantic

## Lawrence Freedman

ARTHUR GAVSHON and DESMOND RICE  
The Sinking of the Belgrano  
218pp. Secker and Warburg. £8.95.  
0436413329

At 16.01 local time on May 2, 1982, a forty-four-year-old cruiser, the General Belgrano, was sunk by a Mark 4 torpedo of a similar vintage, fired from a much more modern, nuclear submarine HMS Conqueror. On return to base the Conqueror flew the Jolly Roger, signifying the sinking of an enemy ship, so reviving a custom last seen in 1945. In doing so it demonstrated a defiant naval pride in an incident that had already become something of a political embarrassment.

No other engagement in the Falklands war proved to be as costly in human life – 368 sailors were killed – and no other has proved to be so controversial. As soon as the news broke there was disquiet at Britain's responsibility for such a dramatic escalation of the war, at the fact that the attack had taken place outside a Total Exclusion Zone around the Falklands defined by Britain, and the unfortunate effect it had on a Peruvian peace initiative. Official explanations have not always been consistent with the evidence or even with each other, and this has contributed to the disquiet. A conspiracy theory has developed, promoted most notably by the Labour MP Tam Dalyell, to the effect that the Belgrano was ordered to be torpedoed so as to wreck the Peruvian initiative.

This new investigation by Desmond Rice and Arthur Gavshon is intended to add to the disquiet. It draws on a substantial amount of new material, particularly concerning the Peruvian proposals and the movements of HMS Conqueror. It exposes the inadequacies in the official story and dispels some myths. However, despite their best efforts the authors fail to substantiate any of the most serious charges against the British government and indeed provide evidence to refute them. More seriously they have not drawn on or even challenged other evidence already in the public domain – evidence which makes the sinking of the Belgrano a less puzzling incident than they wish to suggest.

There is general agreement that when the news of the loss of the Belgrano reached the Argentine military committee, then discussing the Peruvian proposals, on the evening of May 2, all hope of acceptance was dashed. Rice and Gavshon demonstrate with the aid of the transcript of General Galtieri's prior conversations with President Belaúnde of Peru that Galtieri himself was well disposed towards the proposals. However they cannot show that without the sinking of the cruiser the Junta would have accepted the proposals and they do not discuss the widely held view that Admiral Anaya would have vetoed acceptance (they do not know, for example, whether or not Anaya was at the crucial meeting of the evening of May 1 when those of the Junta present decided on a more conciliatory attitude). Was this negative consequence intended? In the Watergate terms in which the authors would undoubtedly like us to view this matter: "How much did she know and when was she told?"

Mrs Thatcher and her War Cabinet should have known about the Peruvian initiative, but at the time of the decision could not have known that it was likely to amount to much. From the book's own chronology it is clear that the War Cabinet had agreed to the attack on the Belgrano, and dispersed from Chequers, before they could have known about the progress of the Peruvian proposals (it was not until the afternoon, British time, that the Foreign Secretary, Francis Pym heard of this in the Secretary of State Alexander Haig's office) and they were not actually informed until after the Belgrano had been hit (when Pym eventually got round to reporting back to London). They might have known what the Peruvians were up to through the British Ambassador to Lima but even this source could not have informed them in time of the encouraging signals from Buenos Aires.

The only way that it could have received such signals if the CIA had tapped the Junta's meeting on the evening of May 1 and transmitted the results directly to London. The authors

assume that this must have been done. They do not bother themselves with such mundane possibilities that even the best intelligence effort takes time to get its information and make sense of it, that relevant people may not attend crucial meetings or decide to go to bed, or that the Americans might have found their sources somewhat less loquacious than usual the day after the United States had come out in favour of Argentina's enemy! It is a general problem with this book that the authors are indignant at every evidence of delayed communications as if the norm in crisis and conflict is always perfect information, accurately and confidently interpreted and acted upon instantly.

To salvage the sense of scandal, all the authors can suggest is that the War Cabinet never had any interest in a negotiated settlement, apart from an unconditional surrender by the Junta. This assertion is not supported by any evidence and is flatly contradicted by other accounts, for example that by Max Hastings and Simon Jenkins, which benefited from much better access to high-level British sources and demonstrates the much more conciliatory attitude taken by the government following the international reaction to the loss of the Belgrano and of HMS Sheffield two days later.

Clearly the War Cabinet was taking a more relaxed attitude towards the negotiating process on May 2. The conflict at that point after a shaky start seemed to be going quite well and the Cabinet was not under the pressure that the Junta felt itself to be under to make concessions. The unfortunate consequences of this attitude appear, from this account, to have been compounded by Francis Pym's limited political clout and diplomatic inexperience and Alexander Haig's tendency to play an over-complicated game. Some of this may be clarified when Haig's own memoir of the conflict appears. It is also clear that there was no reason why the Belgrano need have undermined the peace process. The authors quote the conclusion of the official Argentinian Rattenbach Report to the effect that "the most rational and productive course [for the Junta] would have been to accept the proposal in spite of the sinking of the General Belgrano".

Certainly, if the War Cabinet had ordered the attack with the peace process in mind it could not have been sure as to the precise effect that it would produce. Up to that point military pressure had produced positive diplomatic results and it was only the severity of the losses (which ministers had not, unwisely, expected) that produced the negative reaction from Buenos Aires. The effect of a comparable loss of life on a British ship would probably have been to hasten a settlement.

Other than the effect on the Military Committee's deliberations the sinking of the Belgrano and the fate of the Peruvian proposals do not seem to have had much to do with each other, except to demonstrate the problems posed for diplomacy by the intensifying pace of the military operations.

The reason why it is assumed that the two were closely related is the belief that the attack was not justified on military grounds. It is noted that the rules of engagement were hurriedly changed to permit the attack, that the Belgrano was not well armed (though its escorts were), and had turned round to go home. There was only a slight risk that the trailing submarine would lose sight of its quarry or that a pincer movement was developing with other elements of the Argentine Navy.

The authors wish to direct a political attack against the government. However, they accept that the initiative came from the military. By this stage in the conflict, after a rather harrowing experience in the re-taking of South Georgia, the politicians felt neither willing nor able to question the military's judgment.

The difficulty with the government's explanations lies in the attempt to present the attack as a defensive action when it was nothing of the sort. The authors savage this attempt but without themselves seriously questioning the military judgment. They suggest that it is part of the Navy's nature to see any enemy ship as a threat and therefore wish to sink it, but argue that the politicians should have seen the wider picture. What they fail to do is to ask whether the attack might have formed part of a coherent military strategy.

The Royal Navy now describes the attack

a great military success in that afterwards the Argentine Navy prudently if ungallantly stayed in port. This – or alternatively drawing the Argentine Navy out for an open fight – was exactly what the British commanders were trying to achieve. The strategy at the time was to engage as much as possible of the Argentine Navy and Air Force in order to weaken them prior to any attempted landing to retake the Falklands.

From the moment that the first submarine had arrived off the Falklands and spotted a landing ship the Navy had wanted to sink an Argentine vessel. Its persistent requests had been refused by the government, which did not want to jeopardize the negotiations. It was only on April 22 that the government relented and allowed the submarines to patrol outside the Exclusion Zone. The next day Argentina was warned that any approach by its warships and aircraft which could amount to a threat to the task force would be dealt with by appropriate action. Rice and Gavshon correctly point out that this was ambiguous, and also that the Royal Navy itself felt obliged to seek new rules of engagement before the attack on the Belgrano could be authorized. Nevertheless, this change ought to have dispelled the notion that combat could only take place in the Exclusion Zone. The Argentine Navy had no excuse for not recognizing that any armed ship could easily be construed as a threat.

It was only on April 30 after the failure of Haig's shuttle diplomacy that the British task force was allowed to go on the offensive. On May 1 came the first air engagements, in which the British came out on top. Unfortunately for the strategy, the Argentine Air Force thereafter decided to conserve its resources until required to oppose any British landing. As part of the same offensive the task-force commander wished to attack the Argentine carrier and flagship, the Veinticinco de Mayo. However, the submarine charged with this task, HMS Splendid, lost the trail. Meanwhile the Conqueror had found the third and admittedly the weakest of the Argentine naval task forces, headed by the General Belgrano, accompanied by two destroyers. The authors wonder why, if the Belgrano was really such a threat, it was trailed for so long (some forty hours) before the attack. The answer is that it was not much of a threat and that the Navy was hoping to sink the carrier, but once the carrier had been lost the Belgrano represented the only means of pursuing the current strategy of intimidating the Argentine Navy. By this time the cover story was somewhat flimsier than it would have been if they had attacked earlier when the Argentine ships could have been presented as steaming towards the task force.

If the carrier had been found then there

would have been no problem with a cover story. On May 1 the Veinticinco de Mayo had been out searching for the British fleet. According to Rice and Gavshon, at 20.07 that evening, having seen no action and the action elsewhere having ceased, the Argentine fleet was ordered to return home. This was confirmed at 01.19 on May 2. However, other accounts based on good Argentine sources suggest something quite different. According to these accounts, the Veinticinco de Mayo did not leave for base until dawn, having unsuccessfully attempted to launch its Skyhawks against the task force. (At the time all the relevant units were outside the Exclusion Zone.) If this is correct then serious doubts are raised against the supposition that through the interception of Argentine signals the British commanders would have known that the Argentine fleet was en route home.

In fact the Argentine forces had hardly been idle – they had just not been very successful. According to Argentine and other accounts, the submarine San Luis had torpedoed one British ship, possibly a frigate, on May 1, only for the torpedoes to fail to explode; a pair of Super Etendards had tried to mount an Exocet attack only to be thwarted by a failure in their initial in-flight refuelling; and the aircraft attacking the British task force missed their targets, though only just in the case of HMS Glamorgan.

The point is that the military phase had begun in earnest as far as both sides were concerned. For a number of reasons the British were more successful but that was not for want of trying on the Argentine's part. Rice and Gavshon tend to assume throughout that an eventual British victory was almost a foregone conclusion but that was certainly not how it appeared at the time to the commanders, nor to many impartial observers.

The difficulty is that in contemporary conflict a military logic is always expected to be subservient to a political logic, which is why there has been a persistent search for political motives for the attack on the Belgrano. This political logic is supposed to point to a graduated response, with each escalation only justified if political remedies continue to be frustrated; and all action at the early stages is expected to be solely for defensive purposes, which is why the question with the Belgrano is seen by all sides as being one of the character of the immediate threat posed to the British task force. In the Falklands war of 1982 such a political approach could not be followed because neither side could be confident of victory. Once hostilities had begun, both found themselves approving a military logic that turned out to be politically uncomfortable. That is why the Belgrano was sunk.

## The view from the bridge

### Ian McGeoch

JOHN WINTON  
Convoy: The Defence of Sea Trade 1890–1990  
378pp. Michael Joseph. £14.95.  
0718121635  
STEPHEN HOWARTH  
Morning Glory: A History of the Imperial Japanese Navy  
398pp. Hamish Hamilton. £12.95.  
0241111153

John Winton, in his valuable and timely study of convoy, as a measure for the defence of seaborne trade, is rightly concerned to demystify its abiding value and importance. As we approach the 1990s the Soviet Navy, with its Naval Air Force, poses a potential threat to the shipping of the non-Communist world. The nuclear threshold in Europe is proportional to the speed and certainty with which conventional reinforcements can be brought across the Atlantic. The advent of long-range, anti-ship missiles of pinpoint accuracy, which may be launched from submarines, from aircraft, from surface ships, or from land, coupled with satellite surveillance of the surface of the oceans, calls into question once again the validity of convoy.

In 1914, when the Royal Navy discarded

operating it successfully for centuries, the decision was not based upon rational consideration of the factors involved. Not only did the lack of an adequate Naval Staff preclude this, but the Navy's leaders, to a man, anathematized convoy as a purely defensive strategy which, even if practicable (which was not admitted) could only be implemented by depriving the Grand Fleet of the destroyers which were essential to protect it from torpedo attack while it closed to annihilate range of the German High Seas Fleet. Only under direct pressure from Lloyd George, in the face of inexorable shipping losses, did the Admiralty adopt a general system of convoy. And, although it was reintroduced at the outbreak of the Second World War, study of the forces and tactics needed had been allowed to lapse, and many lessons remained unlearned. Oddly enough, one of the few lacunae in Stephen Howarth's otherwise comprehensive and authoritative history of the Imperial Japanese Navy is the absence of any reference to its failure to protect shipping, upon the safe and timely arrival of which Japan was totally dependent for the oil and strategic raw materials that it was the purpose of the war to secure. Not until March 1944 did the Japanese Navy institute a system of "large convoys" and begin to reap the benefits in terms of US submarines sunk, and ships saved. But it was too little and too late. Not only "face", but the war, was lost.

## Guns for sale

### Anthony Sampson

PATRICK BROGAN and ALBERT ZARCA  
Deadly Business: The Story of Sam Cummings – the World's greatest Arms Dealer  
384pp. Michael Joseph. £9.95.  
0718124154

The character and career of Sam Cummings might seem at first sight to be made for a sinister and thrilling biography. He is the biggest dealer in small arms in the world – though not strictly the greatest arms dealer, since that title is now reserved for governments. He flits through the palaces and arsenals of some of the world's nastiest dictators, re-equipping their armies, preparing them for coups and inspecting their caches of surplus weaponry. He learnt his trade in the CIA and still moves on the edge of secret services. He was consulted by the Argentinians in the midst of the Falklands war, and took part in a British seminar afterwards to analyse its lessons.

Certainly this book, which is largely based on interviews with Cummings, provides useful evidence about many murky conflicts in the developing world – the Central American coups and counter-coups, the civil war in Angola, the South African attack on the Seychelles or the terror-campaigns of President Gaddafi. It is well-written and intelligently sceptical, in a dry style which reflects Cummings's own cynical perspective, while keeping him at a distance. Anyone who is interested in the plots and machinations behind the wars of the past thirty years should check the Cummings version.

Cummings's hard-boiled commentary does something to explain the appalling difficulty of trying to restrain the spread of hand-guns in the United States or – more serious – the arming of the Third World which is causing such misery in Central America or in Lebanon today. He likes to repeat that "guns don't kill people, people kill people". And his whole philosophy, if such it can be called, underlines the fatalism that now seems to afflict all Western governments in their approach to the developing

world. Yet in the end the story is oddly disappointing, whether as a thriller, or as a serious explanation of wars; for Cummings, behind his bleak jokes and his ruthless business ambitions is really, it turns out, a bit of a bore – a gun-freak who seems not to have developed beyond that. He is not wicked enough to emerge as an exciting villain; he cannot compare for instance with the ghastly gun-runner Frank Terpil, an ex-CIA agent who set up a school for saboteurs in Libya and arranged crooked arms deals round the world, whose exploits, as Patrick Brogan and Albert Zarca point out, raise fundamental questions about the corruption of American intelligence. Cummings has remained basically a broker, dealing between one government and another and always dependent on the permission of his Western suppliers. He and the authors protest, perhaps too much, that he now has no links with the CIA; and he insists that he never pays bribes – an opinion which Brogan and Zarca dissent from.

But the detachment which Cummings maintains in this story, whether real or assumed, leaves us without much real flesh-and-blood to get hold of. He buys guns in one place, sells them in another, rushing from one crisis-point to another without apparently understanding much about what happens afterwards, or why. He is after all no more or less than a businessman, treating guns as if they were biscuits or cameras. Not surprisingly the authors' interest seems to flag towards the end and somehow the central figure never quite comes to life. We see him living discreetly in Monte Carlo, with his conventional wife and daughters, technically a British citizen but really with no obvious nationality. We see him visiting dictators, finding them delightful; we see him inspecting arsenals with his expert eye. But his own personality seems to be obliterated by the gunfire – only a mocking laugh, echoing through the arsenals. Perhaps it is an apt retribution: that he should become like one of his weapons, handed on from one squalid war to another, changing sides and surviving every political swing, forgetting any loyalty or nationality in the excitement of the business and eventually bored even by war.

## Quarter-masters' stores

### M. R. D. Foot

PIERRE LORAIN  
Secret Warfare: The arms and the techniques of the Resistance.  
Adapted by David Kalin  
185 pp. Orbis. £7.99.  
085613 586 0

Pierre Lorain's admirable book, privately printed in Paris in 1972 as *Armement clandestin: SOE 1941-1944 France*, is now available in an enhanced translation. It brings into exact focus a great many details about the arming of French resistance by the British Special Operations Executive that had previously been left vague; it makes a strong appeal to three classes of reader, two small and one large.

The small group of arms buffs will be riveted by it. Lorain is an architect, with an architect's sense of form and clarity of vision. He provides a sharp outline drawing of each of the fighting instruments he describes. They range from the Handley Page Halifax and the Short Stirling, four-engined aircraft used by bomber and transport commands of the RAF to parachute arms into France, to the rimless 9mm cartridge of the Sten gun and the escaper's miniature compass, hardly more than half an inch across. On the way, he displays the Bren, three marks of the Sten, the M-1 Winchester carbine and the M-3 sub-machine gun, four marks of the Tommy-gun, the PIAT and the bazooka, and a few of SOE's odder devices: such as the Weir, a single-shot pistol hideable in a trouser leg, or a fountain-pen that could emit a bullet or a pellet of tear-gas. He gives the colour code for time-pencil delay fuses, and shows how a mock log-signal could blow up a train.

The second limited group that will enjoy this book will be most attracted by David Kahn's *Codebreakers* (1966), a blockbuster survey of coding and codebreaking from ancient to recent times. Lorain and Kahn examine in lucid

detail SOE's cipher arrangements in 1941-3, before that service found the answer to its tactical problem. Anyone who enjoys verbal puzzles will enjoy their dissection of the Playfair code – invented by Sir Charles Wheatstone, and familiar to fans of Dorothy Sayers's Lord Peter Wimsey – and of its more intricate successor, the horribly complicated double transposition code based on two numerical keys. When it became clear that the Gestapo might easily unravel double transposition, SOE switched to the Delastelle system which was almost, and then to the one-time pad system which was quite, unbreakable. Why de Gaulle's headquarters in London and Algiers were left to continue for a year to exchange lengthy messages with their supporters in France is a separate question, that Lorain raises but does not seek to answer.

There is also plenty of material here for wireless enthusiasts. Through his friendship with Brigadier F. W. Nicholls, SOE's director of signals, in the brigadier's old age, Lorain has been able to secure detailed drawings of a great many clandestine wireless sets, some created by MI6, some by SOE, and some by obscure but exceedingly competent exiled Poles, who beavered away in a small electronics factory at Letchworth to produce sets that in Lorain's view make all the others look like museum pieces. Nicholls (who died in 1974) and Colonel "Remy" (Gilbert Renault-Rouiller) each contribute a short foreword.

It is not easy for those who never lived in a Nazi-occupied country to imagine what it was like to be there at the time, and to be actively involved in the struggle to get the Nazis out. Lorain's text and illustrations combine very well to give an idea of the results for those who volunteered for this desperate and snag-ridden struggle. In Nicholls's phrase, "their contribution enabled overrun France to regain her self-respect": something that does not show up in any revisionist history books, but was of infinite worth.

## Bringing in the civilians

### E. M. Spiers

BRIAN BOND  
War and Society in Europe 1870-1970  
256pp. Leicester University Press. £12 (paperback, Fontana, £3.50).  
07185 1227 8

Brian Bond has fully sustained the high standard set by the two previous volumes in the series, "War and European Society". He has surveyed an extremely complicated period in which the nature of war changed radically and civil society became ever more closely involved in the actual hostilities.

Beginning with the wars of the 1860s, Bond chronicles the rise of mass conscript armies and the dashing of hopes for a new era of international co-operation. He describes the two horrendous world wars in the first of which the barrier between soldiers and civilians was eroded and in the second virtually removed. He concludes with the division of Europe into two armed camps, with the re-emergence – at least in the West – of more highly professional forces relying upon sophisticated technology and weapon power, whose costs have spiralled and caused increasing public unease.

In this sweeping narrative Bond makes many important points and trenchant observations. In the late nineteenth century he notes that conscription was not simply regarded as a vital component of national security, but was also considered in some countries as "an instrument for developing social cohesion and political docility in the masses". The larger standing armies, he observes, backed by echelons of trained reserves, both reflected international tensions and made them harder to resolve. But the arms races of 1871-1914 did not precipitate any war; indeed, as Bond adds, they sometimes had connotations which were as much political and economic as purely strategic.

Bond attempts boldly to dispose of some

popular caricatures and misconceptions. He writes persuasively about the concept of militarism, indicating that even before the First World War, and certainly in the inter-war period, some civilians were much more belligerent than the military leaders. He questions the view of armies as being mindlessly opposed to technical and tactical innovation; he finds them more culpable of a "predisposition to focus on technicalities and gadgetry to the virtual exclusion of broader political and strategic implications". He also qualifies the assessment of the Allied bombing offensive in the Second World War as futile, comments perceptively about Nazi and Allied attitudes to the persecution of the Jews, and summarizes the revisionist literature on the role of wartime collaborators and the Resistance.

Inevitably, in a book so wide-ranging in scope and yet so concisely written, there are aspects which might have been included or amplified. Bond examines neither the distinctive Spanish military tradition, nor the role of war correspondents, nor European attitudes towards the presence of an American army in post-war Europe. He discusses the use of propaganda in the Second World War but barely mentions it in the First. He also describes the Geneva Gas Protocol as a "notable success" because gas was not employed in the Second World War, although this casual link is by no means clear. Had the protocol been a success, some countries would neither have qualified their ratifications of it, nor prepared both offensively and defensively for gas warfare, nor sought to deter its initiation during the war by threatening their adversaries with massive retaliation in kind.

Bond has had to be selective, however, and has rightly chosen to focus on the main military powers and on the central themes of the period. He has written lucidly and candidly, and, in commenting upon recent literature, forcefully presents his own opinions.

## A Memoir WARS AND RUMOURS OF WARS James Marshall-Cornwall

General Sir James Marshall-Cornwall  
will be 97 when this book is published.

He has lived an extraordinary life. A school friend of Rupert Brooke, he entered the Royal Artillery in 1907 and seven years later joined Haig's staff in World War I. He served with Alexander, Alanbrooke and the 'Auk'; dined with Churchill, De Gaulle, Nehru and Roosevelt, thought Monty was a cad, rubbed shoulders with King Farouk, Lawrence of Arabia and Rudolf Hess, lunched with Maharajas, Viceroy and conversed with most of Europe's vanished royal families.

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ISBN 0-438-97322-5  
12th March



Illustrated, 266 pages  
£12.95



## American notes

### Christopher Hitchens

Most accounts of the New York Abstract Expressionists have been celebrations. This is partly because nothing attracts like success, and because it was the school of Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning *e tutti quanti* which made New York, rather than Paris, the "art capital of the world". It was their movement, too, which gladdened the heart of the great MoMA - the Museum of Modern Art - and raised it to its current eminence.

New York in the period immediately after the war had no guilts to expiate or dirty little secrets to hide. It also contained a fair number of talented artists who had been maturing in the cask and who were bored by the propagandist routines which, originally rooted in the turmoil of the 1930s, had taken on the aspects of a civic duty during the war-time years. The decision by the avant-garde to abandon representational painting was a reaction to the banalities of commitment, and a reaction whose timing happened to be superb. There was a receptive market, or audience, all over Europe as well as in the United States, for the confident, the innovative and the ideologically uncluttered. Irving Sandler's *Triumph of American Painting* is one of those books, about a period, whose unambiguous title is a statement rather than a claim.

Now comes Professor Serge Guilbaut, an art historian at the University of British Columbia, to combat what has become an orthodoxy in its turn. His title, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art* (University of Chicago

Press) also reveals his argument and declares his allegiance. So does his subtitle, which is "Abstract Expressionism, Freedom and the Cold War". The book sets itself to "explain or to analyse the subterranean rumours, protests and frictions that tell us that something else is going on, something that is the real heart of the matter". A large claim, and one which is imperfectly validated by what is a most enthralling polemic.

Guilbaut argues that the decisive years, which were those between 1947 and 1951 (the year in which the avant-garde put on the exhibition now known as the Ninth Street Show) were actually years of pervasive public philistinism. He suspects that "modern art" was an export commodity, consciously promoted by cultural officialdom in a sort of international American boosterism, and seeks to show that, by use of their motifs in corporate advertising and in government-sponsored agencies, these rebels become domesticated and neutered, the apostles of a new conformity who provided a value-free décor for the bland "American century".

Also interesting, but unexplored, is the question of why the Abstract Expressionist movement came to an end. A clue is provided by an interview with the painter Clyfford Still, who felt that "to be stopped by a frame's edge was intolerable, a Euclidean prison, it had to be annihilated, its authoritarian implications repudiated with dissolving one's integrity and idea in material and mannerism". Here is the prefiguration of "action painting", and of the demi-monde, both nihilistic and narcissistic, of Andy Warhol and his imitators. Of what

cultural stratagem of the hegemonic establishment, pray tell, was that product? [How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art will be reviewed in a future issue of the TLS by David Rosand, Chairman of the Department of Art History and Archaeology at Columbia University.]

\* \* \*

At the age of seventy, William Burroughs is no longer an *enfant*, but is still *terrible*. He looks more than ever (to borrow a self-description from Howard Brookner's film profile of him) "like one of those sheep-killing dogs". But he is experiencing - it might be going too far to say enjoying - a revival of interest in his work. His life and his former "beat" colleagues Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac. These things sometimes skip a generation, and today there seems to be some relationship between enthusiasm for Burroughs and the blank world of punk. Sullen young audiences attend his readings and appearances, relishing the foul humour of Doctor Benway as if it were fresh-minted, and bookshops report that it is the "rising" generation which is buying his indifferent new book *The Place of Dead Roads*.

It was, I think, Irving Howe who pointed out the qualities which Burroughs has in common with Céline and Genet. There is a sort of studied amorality; a fascination with crime (and especially with prison); a delight in being un-moved by violence. One of the nicest things a friend of Burroughs could find to say about him in a recent interview was that he would make an excellent prisoner in solitary confinement.

One contemporary version of punk is to be found among the cult known as "Survivalist" - unsmiling loners who are rehearsing for what they see as the coming Apocalypse. They store food, practise for combat and avoid the company of strangers. Burroughs, with his interest in gun-collecting and his boyish pride in marksmanship, makes a sort of talisman for this pessimistic and misanthropic tendency. It's certainly suggestive, in a macabre way, that he should now live in Lawrence, Kansas - the community whose annihilation is depicted in *The Day After*.

\* \* \*

Erich Maria Remarque not only survived the worst thing that has yet happened this century, but escaped, came to America, won renown and fortune and married Paulette Goddard. Ms Goddard has now donated all of Remarque's diaries to the library of New York University. They consist of more than 1,000 pages, written in twenty-two compositions

books. One of them covers the years 1935-1954 and another 1964-1965. According to first reports, they contain character sketches which later appeared in Remarque's fiction and in his many screenplays.

Both Remarque and Goddard always denied that *Shadows in Paradise*, one of his last novels, was a *roman à clef*. But its subject matter, which has "Ross" as a refugee on forged papers and "Natasha" as the fashion model who first befriended and then falls for him, is fairly unmistakable. There are also some biting scenes of Hollywood, where talented German Jewish émigrés scrounge for walk-on parts as SS men in cheap war films, which suggest that Remarque did not always love his adopted country or milieu.

Remarque arrived in the United States in 1939, commenting that it was "like getting some ground under your feet". He became a citizen in 1949 and married Paulette Goddard (by then divorced from Charlie Chaplin and Burgess Meredith) in 1958. It was not for some years that he revealed that he had been working for the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS) on the problem of "re-educating" Germany after the war. He argued strongly that Allied propaganda should stress that Hitler was a disaster for Germany as well as for the Jews and other Europeans. Ms Goddard more than once told interviewers the story of Remarque's younger sister, who was beheaded by the Gestapo for saying that Germany would lose the war. The Gestapo sent Remarque a bill for ninety Deutschmarks costs of the execution.

As the girl who was described as "a tempestuous half-breed siren" for playing "Louvette" in *Northwest Mounted Police*, and who starred in such movies as *Pot o' Gold*, *Reap the Wild Wind* and *Nothing but the Truth* (not to speak of *Duffy's Tavern*) La Goddard must be the original for the studio darling in Evelyn Waugh's *The Loved One*. A saucy colleen in one chapter, and a flashing-eyed prima donna in the next, she never really got a serious part. Being pipped by Vivien Leigh to play Scarlett O'Hara seems to have been the last straw and her gift of Remarque's diaries is the act for which she ought to be remembered.

I offer my deepest apologies to Dr Shiv K. Kumar and to the Vanguard Press for my assertion, in last month's "American notes", that Vanguard, who publish Dr Kumar's novel *Nude Before God*, are a vanity press. Vanguard Inc, of 424 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10017 are, of course, a long-established and distinguished literary publishing house.

### AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Jeremy Adler is a lecturer in German at Westfield College, London.  
Brenda Bolton is a lecturer in History at Westfield College, London.  
Lord Briggs's most recent book, *A Social History of England*, was published last year.  
Samuel Brittan's *The Role and Limits of Government* was published earlier this year.  
Lord Carver's *War Since 1945* was published in 1980.  
Richard Dawkins is the author of *The Extended Phenotype*, 1983.  
Tom Ditch's most recent book, *Burn This*, was published in 1982.  
Philip Edwards is the author of *Threshold of a Nation: A Study in English and Irish Drama, 1979*.  
M. R. D. Foot is co-author of *M19: Escape and Evasions, 1939-1945*, 1979.  
A. J. Forey is a Reader in History at the University of Durham.  
Joseph Frank's *Dostoevsky: The years of ordeal 1850-1859* will be published shortly.  
Wilma George is a lecturer in Zoology at the University of Oxford.  
Henry Gifford's books include *Tolstoy*, 1982.  
Julie Hankey's theatre-historical edition of *Richard III*, was published in 1981.  
José Harris is a Fellow of St Catherine's College, Oxford.  
Christopher Hitchens is Washington correspondent for the *Nation*.  
Douglas Johnson is Professor of French History at University College London.  
John Keep is Professor of Russian History at the University of Toronto.  
Richard Lindley is a lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Bradford.  
Nicholas Mann's *Petrarch* will appear later this year.  
Ian McGeoch is a naval contributor to Peter-Kurt Würzbach's *Die Atom-Schwelle haben*.  
W. H. Newton-Smith is Fairfax Fellow in Philosophy at Balliol College, Oxford.  
Mark Ridley is Astor Junior Research Fellow of New College, Oxford.  
Douglas Rimmer's *The Economies of West Africa* was published earlier this year.  
Howard Robinson's *Master and Senses: A critique of contemporary materialism* was published in 1982.  
Anthony Sampson's books include *The Arms Bazaar*, 1977.  
Edward M. Spillars's *Chemical Warfare* will be published later this year.  
George Steiner's books include the novel, *The Portage to San Cristobal of A. H.*, 1981.  
Hew Strachan's *European Armies and the Conduct of War* was published last year.  
Jonathan Sumption is the author of *The Albigensian Crusade*, 1978.  
Julian Symonds's *The Name of Anthony Lee* was published last year.  
Philip Thody is a Professor of French Literature at the University of Leeds.  
Philip Towle is the author of *Arms Control and East-West Relations*, 1983.  
Roger Warren's *A Midsummer Night's Dream: Text and Performance* was published last year.  
Richard Widdows is a lecturer in Indian Music at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London.

## Letters

### The Rosenberg Case

Sir, - Michael Meeropol's letter (February 10) questions Hugh Brogan's reasoning, in his review of Radosh and Milton's book on the Rosenbergs, about the chain of evidence that led from Klaus Fuchs to the Rosenbergs. The following quotations from Kim Philby's *My Silent War* (1968) are not irrelevant to the issue (my references are to the Ballantine edition, New York, 1983).

Philby refers to his stay in Washington as being in "the era of Hiss, Coplon, Fuchs, Gold, Greenglass and the brave Rosenbergs - not to mention others who are still nameless" (p155). Like Brogan, Philby discusses the chain of discovery that led the authorities from Fuchs to Gold, and adds that "from Gold, who was also in a talkative mood, the chain led inexorably to the Rosenbergs, who were duly electrocuted" (p170). And finally, Philby says that "Fuchs was instrumental, through his confession, in uncovering the espionage ring in which he was involved with Harry Gold, David Greenglass, and Julius and Ethel Rosenberg" (p182n).

Was Philby being careless? Or speaking from "the inside"? Or acting from some unfathomable motive? Should not this piece of testimony be at least introduced into the debate and seriously discussed?

IGOR KOPYTOFF,  
675 rue Bloomfield, Montreal.

### Judging Brecht

Sir, - In my haste to get off my reply to John Willett I missed the typing error in my letter (February 17). "S", of course, should have been "s". Had I seen a proof I would have caught it.

Willett's rejoinder is disingenuous. He cannot but know that "S" for "s" makes no sense of the words I quoted. His tortured exegesis of Brecht's remark is reminiscent of the respondent's defence against the charge that he damaged the kettle he had borrowed: he never borrowed it; it was already damaged when he borrowed it; it was his property anyhow.

Willett also ignores the evidence that Brecht made similar remarks to others, eg. Professor Henry Pachter (*New Leader*, April 28, 1969). James K. Lyon in his *Bertolt Brecht in America* (1980) reports that Brecht expressed sentiments of a like character to Viertel and Aufrecht (p294).

SIDNEY HOOK,  
Hoover Institution, Stanford, California 94305.

### Christian Belief

Sir, - Dennis Nineham, reviewing Robert Rundle's *Windows onto God* (February 24), seems surprised at the fact that the Archbishop "In one of his Easter sermons . . . insists dogmatically on the historicity of what is reported in the Gospels without so much as hinting that, or why, he parts company in the matter from a considerable scholarly consensus".

Surely the answer is obvious? The historicity of the Resurrection is the fundamental dogma of the Christian faith upon which the whole fabric rests, and if Dr Rundle did not hold it he ought not, in honesty, to continue as a Christian minister, still less as a bishop of Christ's Church. The academic refutation of unbelief is a part of episcopal responsibility, but not on Easter Day, when the preacher's task is to proclaim the glorious mystery. "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins . . . But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep." St Paul's triumphant declaration is as fundamental for Christians today as it was for the Corinthian Church in the first century.

This is understood by the Eastern Orthodox Church, seen by Professor Nineham as "a real brake on healthy developments". Despite its failings (and I have been trying to come to terms with these for thirty years) - its complacency and self-satisfaction, its narrowness and not infrequent obscurantism - its glory is that it continues to maintain the central tenets of the faith, which alone make Christianity relevant and meaningful, and does not try to water them down to placate the spirit of the age. That is one reason why it is so bitterly hated by Russian Communism, which is well aware of the danger to itself of sincerity in an

enemy; for Orthodoxy does not admit the dishonest doctrine that a man can effectively renounce Christian belief while still remaining a teaching minister of the Church. It is this attitude, inherited from the superficial scepticism of the Enlightenment, which has been the disastrous legacy of so much Liberal Protestant thought. There is something distasteful in the spectacle of a man reciting the Creed in church and then denying what he has affirmed in the lecture room or in conversation with others. It is to Dr Runcie's credit that, although caught up in the machinery of the established Church of England, he rejects this particular form of intellectual dishonesty.

GERALD BONNER,  
Department of Theology, University of Durham,  
Abbey House, Palace Green, Durham.

### T. S. Eliot

Sir, - From the recent correspondence in your columns, it does appear that there are a number of hitherto uncatalogued papers by T. S. Eliot; though these papers circulate amongst a select few, access and proper attribution does entail difficulty. For example, I have been sent in the post a section of a poem which is claimed to be by Eliot. I am told that it is part of a ninety-line poem by Eliot. The writer suggests the poem was written during the early years of the marriage between Tom Eliot and Vivienne Haigh Wood. And perhaps it is something I might like to quote from in my play *Tom and Viv*. Now, I had not heard of this poem before. I thought perhaps it was a section from a known piece, and later much altered; and there are examples of this. Or, it could be a poem which had been withdrawn from the works at some time; there are indeed examples of this, too. It could even be an extract from a poem by Vivienne Eliot, for there are instances of Tom and Viv using each other's lines in their work.

Now, myself and Max Stafford-Clark at the Royal Court Theatre would have liked to use this extract, if indeed it was by Tom or Viv. But how could we set about this? What avenue is there left open to us after we have already been denied so much access to Eliot papers? Where does this ninety-line poem come from? Why do a few appear to have read it or seen it? May I quote from it? Indeed, may I quote from the correspondent who originally sent me the piece and recalled a section from memory? If this poem is a collaboration between Tom and Viv whose is the copyright?

Dare I suggest that a catalogue of secrecy appears still to cloak study of Eliot?

MICHAEL HASTINGS,  
2 Helix Gardens, London SW2.

Sir, - I was not trying to dismiss *The Waste Land* as Philip Edwards suggests (Letters, February 24). I said clearly that it was the poem's power that made it urgent that we knew the source and validity of its attitudes. C. H. Sisson (Letters, March 2) has also got it back to front in pretending that I said we need to know the private life before we can read the author. Indeed, it is the reverse; great works make us want to know more about their authors. I was merely suggesting that we should not mistake our authors for gods, not answerable for their attitudes, nor their works for scripture, to read unquestioned. As Sisson very well knows, Eliot is not the only author who has pointed to some half-concealed sexual distress in Shakespeare's plays, nor is Freud (incidentally, and *pace* Sisson, I am sure many would agree with me that Freud is an unwholesome influence in the area we are discussing, that is, relationships with the feminine). Ted Hughes, in a brilliant essay introducing his *A Choice of Shakespeare's Verse*, says of Shakespeare, "And it so happened that his nature was such and the time was such and the place was such that this symbolic form of his nature - his deeply divided nature . . . appeared to him, when he exploited it for drama, as a problem - the posing of a chronic sexual dilemma, a highly dramatic and interesting collision of forces."

It is surely valuable to know the rules an author plays by, particularly if he is an author strong enough to influence our behaviour towards each other. It is the half-concealed truths that often operate on us most powerfully. Thus Marilyn French, in her *Shakespeare's Division of Experience*, also examines

Shakespeare's important female characters and concludes that they reduce either to the comradely, woosable and ultimately biddable future mother-of-your-children, or to the dangerous, uncontrollable death-witch; independently echoing Hughes's categories. Perhaps it is difficult for many Englishmen to see women in any other way, so forceful is Shakespeare's example. Is it not interesting and relevant that the inspirational feminine does not appear in our literature with the strength and immediacy that it manifests in, to quote Sisson's example, Dante? In an attempt to identify the source, validity and power of the negative feminine stereotypes, Penelope Shuttle and I have written *The Wise Wound* (1978), which, we hope, is to be reissued shortly with an additional long essay on the power of the "chronic sexual dilemma" that parallels Shakespeare's in such poets as Blake, Baudelaire, Rilke and Sylvia Plath.

PETER REDGROVE,  
Falmouth, Cornwall.

### Jaroslav Seifert

Sir, - May I correct two errors in Roger Scruton's sympathetic review of Jaroslav Seifert's poetry (February 24)?

Seifert broke with the Czech Communist Party in 1929 and not in 1919, when he was just eighteen years old and the party yet to be founded. And *Morový Sloup* (The Plague Column) has not only been translated (by Ewald Osers), it was published in London five years ago by Terra Nova Editions.

I would also take issue with the implication behind Scruton's statement in his last paragraph, which would seem to indicate that the Czechoslovak authorities banned Seifert for what he wrote. His status as *persona non grata* was much more due to what he was and is, to the brave stand against censorship and repression he took in the 1950s and then again, as President of the Writers' Union, after the Soviet invasion of 1968.

GEORGE THEINER,  
39c Highbury Place, London N5.

### Athenian Religion

Sir, - My review (March 2) of Jon D. Mikalson's *Athenian Popular Religion* was altered and truncated after I had seen the proof, in such a way as to leave my argument incomplete. The review should have ended as follows:

"Greek traditional tales ventured into alarming areas of cultural contradiction and ambiguity, areas with which the Athenian speech-writers were, in their professional capacities, evidently unconcerned. But we should not copy their indifference. Relating Greek myths to the practicalities of everyday behaviour has not often been done with success, but it is (as shown by J. Gould's pioneering paper in the *Journal of Hellenic Studies* for 1980) a fruitful topic for research. Those who pursue it in the future will do well to temper their imagination with Mikalson's common sense."

RICHARD BUXTON,  
Department of Classics and Archaeology, University of Bristol, Queens Road, Bristol.

We apologize for a printing error which distorted the sense of part of Jennifer Hornsby's review of John R. Searle's *Intentionality* in last week's issue. The third paragraph of the review should have begun: "Is there not a problem here? If we use Searle's analogies to cast light on the mind from the direction of language, but at the same time take Searle's view of the priorities, then we seem to be left with the question of what it is for there to be intentional mental phenomena in the first place."

The 11th Annual Conference of the UK Association for Legal and Social Philosophy will be held at University College London from April 6 to 8, on the theme of Discrimination and Equality. The Austin Lecture will be given by Amartya Sen on "Rights as Goals". There will be symposia on Justice and Discrimination; Procedural Equality; Reverse Discrimination; and Changing Notions of Discrimination. Further details can be obtained from Stephen Guest, Faculty of Laws, University College London, 4-8 Endsleigh Gardens, London WC1H 0EG.

## Books from Oxford: History

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name and was largely propagated by the two journals that he edited in the early 1860s, *Vremya* (Time) and *Epokha* (Epoch). The movement in question was called *pochvennichestvo*, which Dowler, a Canadian historian, has translated as "native soil movement". *Pochva* does mean "soil" in Russian, with the accessory significance of "ground, basis, or footing"; the "native" is not contained in the word, but indicates some sense of the movement as a whole. For it was intensely patriotic, and called for Russian literature and culture to throw off the yoke of foreign ideas and values and to seek for nourishment in its native soil. The search for "roots", which has become so prominent on the cultural scene everywhere in the world today (including the Soviet Union), was anticipated as a slogan and programme more than a hundred years ago in Dostoevsky's journals.

The three most prominent figures of the movement were Apollon Grigor'ev, Dostoevsky himself, and Dostoevsky's erstwhile "friend" and first biographer, Nikolay Strakhov, who wrote a scurrilous letter about him, after his death, to Tolstoy. Grigor'ev was a tempestuous and colourful personality, a gifted poet and critic, who unfortunately shared the national vice of heavy drinking and led a wild and disorderly life. It has been suggested by two Soviet critics that he provided some of the inspiration for Dmitry Karamazov; and the penchant of that character both for drunkenness and for breaking into poetry at crucial moments lends some plausibility to the hypothesis. Alexander Blok collected Grigor'ev's poetry at the beginning of the present century, and Soviet scholarship, though very gingerly, has begun to pay attention to his criticism again, which was more or less looked on as a historical curiosity until fairly recently. But he was far and away the best literary critic of the mid-century; and though he had little success in his lifetime with the public, who turned to so-called literary criticism for political propaganda in favour of revolution, his merits as a perceptive interpreter of Russian culture are gradually beginning to be recognized.

Dowler's book gives a very well-informed account of Grigor'ev's career and his early association with the young editors of the journal *Moskvitianin*, a rather musty pillar of Russian patriotic nationalism, which took a new lease on life in the early 1850s, when it was turned over temporarily by its editor, the historian M.P. Pogodin, to a group of younger writers including Grigor'ev, the playwright Ostrovsky, and the novelist A.F. Pisemsky. It was in these years that Grigor'ev began to develop the ideas that became so important for Dostoevsky, though Dowler perhaps exaggerates the extent of the novelist's indebtedness to the critic. There is no question that Dostoevsky took over a number of Grigor'ev's formulations and perceptions. But these did not so much shape Dostoevsky's own views as enable him to express, in terms of a philosophy of Russian culture, the intuitions and attitudes that he had arrived at independently on the basis of his own experiences in Siberia and the "regeneration" of his convictions that occurred there.

*Pochvennichestvo* is usually seen as a variety of Slavophilism, and so indeed it is; but the same can also be said of Herzen's "Russian Socialism", to which *pochvennichestvo* bears a great deal of resemblance. What distinguishes the "native soil movement" from orthodox Slavophilism, as Dowler excellently shows, is its acceptance of the transformations wrought in Russian culture by the Westernization of Peter the Great; where the Slavophiles looked backward to the mythical and idyllic past that Andrzej Walicki has labelled a "conservative Utopia", the *pochvenniki* looked forward to the synthesis of the educated classes and the peasantry into a new Russian nationality combining Western enlightenment with the Christian moral values still existing at the root of Russian life. They also separated themselves from the Russian Westerners by rejecting the Hegelian idea of a universal humanity evolving

in a single direction – that of progress, or what we would now call modernization – and appealed rather to Schelling's idea of the "universal relativism" of the historical process, which meant that each nationality was free to work out the laws of its own internal evolution and was not part of an all-subsuming World Spirit.

The *pochvenniki* were philosophical Idealists, who fought the influence of materialism and Utilitarianism on the majority of the Russian intelligentsia, and who realized that such doctrines were an integral part of their programme of social-political revolution. But while the *pochvenniki* were against revolution (even to imagine that one was possible, Dostoevsky believed, was sheer self-delusion), they were by no means self-satisfied conservatives, and supported all the reform measures of the government as well as self-government through the peasant communes and local district councils. They also vigorously defended the freedom of the artist to create independent of the political pressures exercised by such radical spokesmen as Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov and Pisarev. It is not true, however, as Dowler states, that "they reacted against what in Russia was called 'accusatory literature'"; at least it is not true of Dostoevsky, who specifically took a stand in its favour. They saw Russian culture as engaged in a struggle between European (rapacious, egoistic) and Russian (meek, Christian) types of character and moral values – a struggle which had been fought through and resolved by Pushkin; and this typology unquestionably has had an impact on the national imagination, even if their political influence was nil. It may be that only at present is *pochvennichestvo* having some political effect; for these ideas, kept alive by the powerful genius of Dostoevsky, can still be found at work in such a writer as Solzhenitsyn.

The present book is certainly the best and most extensive treatment of this movement known to me, and is a fine contribution to the illumination of an essential aspect of Dostoev-

sky's background. Thoroughly versed in Russian cultural history, Dowler also places the "native soil movement" in the broader context of European conservatism; and he sees it as a response, just as was Russian radicalism, to the pressures exerted by modernization. The major weakness of the book is one of omission, aside from a few errors here and there (the "literary and musical" evening in the spring of 1862, which Dostoevsky later dramatized in *The Devils*, was not evidence of a "mood of co-operation among the intelligentsia" but a left-wing demonstration). If Dowler had carried on a more extensive comparison with Herzen's very similar development of a left-wing, rather than a centrist, variety of Slavophilism, the value of his discussion would have been greatly enriched. For he is genuinely insightful into how little the political slogans of right and left meant in Russia, and how close the two were in basic ideas when looked at from a European point of view.

One may conclude by citing part of his own conclusion, which sums up the position that has allowed him to write so unbiased a book, and to escape the usual error of regarding the *pochvenniki* simply as so many reactionary obscurantists who happened, by accident, to have a great writer in their midst. "The socially unattached intelligentsia", Dowler says,

which was largely the product of the intensification of urban culture in the closing years of the reign of Nicholas I, addressed itself to the tensions in Russian thought and life that were generated by the slow process of modernization. These tensions were encapsulated in the metaphor Russia and the West. The outlook of both radicals and conservatives among the *intelligentsia* was shaped not only by their common intellectual roots in romanticism and utopian socialism, but also by their vehement rejection of the individualistic values and mechanical social arrangements that they believed characterized life in the bourgeois West. Both sides, consequently, ended by advocating remarkably similar collectivist or communist social objectives.

Just so; and a little more documentation of this crucial convergence would have been all to the good.

## Consuming passions

Peter Kemp

JOHN BRAINE  
*The Two of Us*  
183pp. Methuen. £7.95.  
0413 512800

"I don't inhabit the world of new loose covers and new curtains, Mummy", a teenager cries pettishly in John Braine's *The Two of Us*. If so, she is the only person in the book who doesn't. Around Charbury – the novel's Yorkshire setting – carpets, draperies, wallpaper, all itemized in dizzying detail, are copiously strewn. Consumer durables, bristling with brand-names, are also lavishly on display. Stocked with commodities – and dummies – *The Two of Us* seems not so much a novel as a department store.

Obviously, the book deals – as its title implies – with partnerships: the marriage and extra-marital affairs of Clive and his wife, Robin; the homosexual union of Norman and Gary. From the start, the latter relationship is presented as hopelessly unstable. While Norman thinks of himself as "a tiny bright-eyed bunny rabbit", Gary "was in the essential respects superabundantly and even frighteningly masculine". The sleazily coy tone discernible here also goose-pimples Braine's accounts of heterosexual affairs – "There was another part of her that he liked, which needn't be particularized." But, though sex attracts much pursued peering – "Her hand busied itself at his groin" – it is over the possession of objects, not people, that this novel becomes most excited. Sometimes, it is difficult to disentangle physical from proprietary passion: "Her hand slid up to his groin. He sighed, looking out into the garden: there was well over an acre of it." Invariably – despite peppery outbursts intimating that

psychological insights are being proffered: "Yes, the point is re-iterated: she was a romantic" – people's purchases receive far more attention than their personalities. True to the book's priorities, one character has a "troubling plausible fantasy of material objects . . . actually breeding". In *The Two of Us*, they at least team, complete with ostentatious labels. Dunhill lighters glint repeatedly. People bounce from Parker-Knoll chairs, linger round Habitat furniture, or recline on a "new chaise-longue from Heals". Clive stops visiting Robin's bedroom, preferring to spend the night with "a new Dunlopillo mattress in his own room".

Clothes also contribute crucially to the fabric of the novel – partly as a means of camouflage the dearth of personality. Slack bundles of cliché – dour mill-owner, pirouetting pansy, saturnine stud – Braine's characters rely on the belts and buckles, seams and straps of their rigorously retailed rig-outs to hold them together. Opening with a fashion-show, the novel always obsessively inspects outfits – as with "a middle-aged man in a blue shadow-striped worsted suit of what was recognizably . . . by the drape certainly of the finest grade – the highest count of threads, definitely in the Super Seventies". Top-drawer togs are fitted to the most unlikely elements: "He was Heathcliff running towards Cathy . . . in his suit from Huntsman's . . . made-to-measure shoes from Lobb's, and silk shirt and silk tie from Gieves and Hawkes".

Perfumery and pharmaceuticals are also heavily drawn upon. Prissy Norman is awash with piquant toiletries. The shifting balance of power between Clive and his brother, Donald, is registered through their varying dependence on antacid tablets. Initially, Donald is the bilious underdog, seen "sucking Bisodol tablets"

inspector, is introduced, unsuspecting, all-knowing, hardly a serious figure.

The machinery is plain enough: "Tantalus" is the force of sex – though the latter is not withheld at all. There is not a single dull relationship in the book, which makes them all quite grey. Each of the characters resembles one of those strips of two metals that bend this way or that according to the temperature applied to them.

On the evidence of this novel, Ms Hemingway is capable of writing a routine thriller – she manages the plotting, wrestles with motivation, remembers to leave gaps in the narrative, is careful with details like holiday snapshots, and, in a hackneyed way, she has the lingo: "He looked very foreign and excitable, his dun-yellow eyes dark with unexpected pain." Her uneasiness is manifest in the repeated use of unwisely expanding sentences: "With a curious detachment, she found herself wondering at the unsuspected depths of her capacity for passion – a cold, hungry passion that was stronger and deeper than any warmer feeling she had ever known." This is just the author's fear of the full-stop.

There is, though, a more interesting, genuine talent also in evidence, for social comedy and critical observation. Left over, I suspect, from the character of Caroline, there is a lot of disdain, wryness and rejection: "The soup was vegetal in flavour and coloured a drab orange which spoke of carrots"; or "It was the kind of place where all the furniture was made of pine and the crockery was cubist earthenware. The walls were covered with knotted string and instead of pictures there were two or three collages of the dead-leaf-and-leather variety." *The Elan* and *Nauteur* of this promise a far more satisfactory novel than the uncertain *Tantalus*.

Between February and December 1903, three years after the publication of *Sister Carrie*, Theodore Dreiser was in New York without a job. He was saved from near-breakdown by finding work as a labourer on the NY Central Railroad. His account of the experience, *An Amateur Laborer*, is published for the first time in an edition prepared by Richard W. Dowell (207pp, University of Pennsylvania Press, £13.75, 0 8122 7890 9).

so very frequently that he succumbs to a surfeit of symbolism: "he daren't take any more . . . because he'd already exceeded his ration and there'd be the risk of diarrhoea". Then the tables turn: as Donald triumphantly tucks in to cheese and pickled onions, Clive, his mouth caked with the taste of chalk and peppermint, is observed sourly "extricating two antacid tablets from the tightly wrapped roll".

As usual, Braine is especially fond of using cars to drive a point home. Robin, when elated, finds "the fact that her car was a Triumph Vitesse helped this mood along". Gary – who runs a Morris Minor 1000 Traveller with "no extras except a radio" – has had a life particularly rich in automobile incident. His parents died in a crash "in their 1960 Vauxhall Cresta", and, unknown to Norman, he once had sex with a girl "in the back seat of a borrowed Austin 12".

Ultimately, this bisexuality proves lethal.

## Belying appearances

Christopher Hawtree

PENELOPE LIVELY  
*Corruption*  
136pp. Heinemann. £7.95.  
0434 427411

Penelope Lively's fictional world is a subtle one, as her previous collection of stories, *Nothing Missing but the Samovar*, and the novels show. In *Corruption*, as before, the comedy – even when it approaches overt satire – is always provoked by events that could equally have inspired the most dismal tragedy.

The title-story concerns a judge and his wife on holiday in East Anglia. With their Wine Society boxes and enjoyment of music, they are the familiar characters that inhabit the changing England of Mrs Lively's fiction. Pressure of work, involving the forthcoming trial of an importer of steamy pornographic magazines, means that the judge has to give some of his time to studying these publications. His own body is a matter for different, more sombre speculation, which brings out the title's other, passive meaning. Lying in the bath and "contemplating the rise of his belly", the judge thought for a while in a vague and melancholy way about bodies, about how we inhabit them and are dragged to the grave by them and are conditioned by them. In the course of his professional life he had frequently had occasion to reflect upon the last point: it had seemed to him, observing the faces that passed before him in courtrooms, that confronted him from docks and witness boxes, that not many of us are able to rise above physical appearance. The life of an ugly woman is different from that of a beautiful one; you cannot infer character from appearance, but you can suspect a good deal about the circumstances to which it will have given rise.

It is a mark of Penelope Lively's skill that she can create familiar figures in recognizable circumstances and yet make their behaviour appear as unusual as it is credible. Perhaps the most extreme variant of this was the story in the earlier collection about a woman, haunted by a commanding voice, who filled her house

Though the couple whoop it up in Gary's flat, puffing pink and mauve cocktail cigarettes, sipping Asti Spumante, and romping on a black satin coverlet, Norman senses that all is not well. When at home, climbing disconsolately into "the all-cotton Marks and Spencers pyjamas he always preferred", he fears he is losing Gary – a premonition cruelly fulfilled when Gary is seduced by a designing female who artfully invites him to a restaurant in Harrogate where "the shocking pink and pale fawn of the brand-new décor was an almost exact match for his button-down silk shirt". Alone amid his tasteful furnishings, Norman realizes it's curtains. After an overdose, he expires – in true Braine vein – surrounded by a kind of consumer's funeral pyre: red morocco slippers, a blue silk polka-dot dressing-gown, a red silk scarf, cologne, talc, a gold lighter, a new box of Balkan Sobranie Cocktail cigarettes, and, of course, his all-cotton pyjamas.

with various coloured lodgers in order to spite the neighbours and was taken off "for a rest" just as the plumbing was about to collapse under the strain.

The passing of time, the changes and decay it brings and all that it tries to conceal, are recurring themes. Perhaps the most shocking story is "The Darkness Out There", in which a pair of adolescents, cockily knowing, learn that the sweet old lady for whom they do social work once left the trapped, surviving gunner of a crashed German aeroplane to freeze and starve to death in his turret. "She seemed composed of circles, a cottage-loaf of a woman, with a face below which chins collapsed one into another, a creamy smiling pool of a face in which her eyes snapped and darted." Appearances such as this can indeed belie earlier behaviour: Penelope Lively conveys both in a prose that is invariably as precise as it is unostentatious. The only unsatisfying item in the collection is "The Pill-Box" in which the self-referential male narrator uneasily confronts the choice of events and endings available to him; this lacks the careful finish which makes such considerations irrelevant to Penelope Lively's best fiction, in which, without pushing the comparison too far, she appears as a natural successor to Barbara Pym and Elizabeth Taylor.

Present and past, speculation and resolution merge in "The Art of Biography". As in "Nothing Missing but the Samovar", a scholar constantly puts off his girlfriend in order to stay longer with the papers; while the earlier burrower became increasingly reluctant to work in the past, this one is all the more absorbed; the unexpected ending for which he had to wait so patiently provides a neatly ironic contrast to his own circumstances. *Corruption*, short as it is, contains more good writing and acute observation than is to be found in many stouter books, and leaves one all the more impatient for Penelope Lively's next novel.

## Writing for the nation

Henry Gifford

ANNA AKHMATOVA  
Poems.  
Translated by Lyn Coffin  
Introduction by Joseph Brodsky  
100pp, W. W. Norton. £4.50.  
0393 300145

Anna Akhmatova liked to say that her verse could not be translated, whereas Mandelstam's could. As Lydia Chukovskaya explains, "the complexity, the individuality of Mandelstam strike immediately and this, strangely enough, eases the task of a translator". Akhmatova, with due apologies, likened herself in this respect to Pushkin. The two great qualities of her poetry are defined by Joseph Brodsky in his searching introduction to this volume as nobility and restraint. She belonged to the high Petersburg tradition that includes so many of the best Russian poets. Brodsky speaks of her desire in poetry to "maintain appearances": she was "blatantly non-eventy"; though the adverb may seem too violent for a writer so unassertive and serene in her bearing. Brodsky mentions her plain syntax which "resembles English", and goes on to describe Akhmatova as a Jane Austen among her Russian contemporaries. The two women could not have been further apart in situation but she does match Jane Austen in self-knowledge and sense of decorum.

From the first she possessed a style which she deepened but never abandoned, unlike Pasternak or Yeats. Brodsky admires the sure instinct of Anna Gorenko at seventeen in adopting the name Anna Akhmatova. He says "In a sense, it was her first successful line" – a prophetic name, with its *Akh*, the natural exclamation of one aghast at misfortune, "sponsored less by sentiment than by history". Brodsky denies her a genealogy; but this is to overlook what Pushkin and some of his generation gave her, and among the poets in her own time Blok, Kuzmin and Annensky, the last of whom in a late poem she acknowledges as her

teacher. Also, as Brodsky himself has noted, she profited very much from the achievements of the nineteenth-century Russian novel – a point first made by Mandelstam.

To adapt a register like hers, which runs from the intimate to a magnificent impersonality, as when she claims in *Requiem* to speak for the "hundred millions" of her people, demands exceptional tact and resourcefulness. Lyn Coffin brings to the task some distinct advantages. For a beginning she can make the poems read like her own experience; next, she knows how to modulate from colloquial ease to an elegance at times highly wrought; and lastly the changes forced on her by rhyme and regular forms are often imaginative and usually discreet. Take the opening stanza of "Masquerade in the Park" (where Akhmatova has stolen not parted company from Kuzmin):

The moonlight reaches under the eaves,  
Its course across the river is erratic . . .  
The small cold hands of the marquise  
Are lightly aromatic.

The translator moves freely here within the confines of the original. Her one contribution, making the cold hands *small*, is in keeping with the artificial mode of this piece. Again, in a poem of 1940, "The Willow", she begins effectively:

I grew up where all was patterned and silent,  
In the cool nursery of the age, itself young;  
I didn't like human words, spoken or sung,  
But I understood what the wind meant.  
I liked burdock and nettles but the willow tree,  
The silver willow I liked especially.

One slight feature in the first line is missing. Here, as so often, Akhmatova opens with the conjunction *And*, expressing "while" or a mild "but", to imply that a conversation has been going on. The translator adds "spoken or sung", but this subtracts little from Akhmatova's habitual terseness. The repetition of "the willow tree" / "The silver willow" is a rather graceful concession to the demands of metre. At a final instance, the celebrated "Let's Wife". The beginning is dramatic in the measured style of the Russian:

And the just man followed God's ambassador here,  
Huge and bright against the mountain black,  
But alarm spoke loudly in the woman's ear . . .

Later there comes a skilful reminder of Emily Dickinson: "Her eyes couldn't see if they saw or not" ("I could not see to see", from "I heard a Fly buzz – when I died"). The conclusion is pleasingly managed:

She's seen as a kind of loss and yet  
Who will grieve for this woman, cry for this wife?  
My heart alone will never forget:  
For a single look, she gave up her life.

If the second line in the previous extract makes a half-gesture towards the "huge peak, black and huge" of the 1850 *Prelude*, this stanza puts one in mind of John Crowe Ransom – the intonations of "The Dead Boy".

Hints like these are not at all out of place. The translator writes as a poet in her native tradition, and by such means the unfamiliar is brought into focus. But there are certain problems for an American translator confronting Akhmatova. She is indefeasibly a European, in her *temple*, the combination of ease and formality (though Europeans like her are becoming scarce). Brodsky points out that a poet in writing for the entire nation is "a born democrat", and, once more in agreement with Mandelstam, he speaks of Akhmatova's gravitation "to the vernacular, to the idiom of folk song". However, the voice of egalitarian America has a quite different informality from hers. Lyn Coffin is unguarded in her readiness to throw in "I guess", "I mean", "That's for sure", when Akhmatova makes no such casual bids for the reader's assent. Her own verse is strict in its observation of line endings: often it assumes the character of an inscription. She would have reproved the untidiness of these lines, to give one example: "The birches are the first to join the dance since they're / Draped in see-through lace and since . . . Incidentally, 'see-through' (rather than 'diaphanous') reflects the attitudes of a different time, just as it is wrong to make Akhmatova wear her light skirt 'in the home' of appearing a style."

type, but was unique.

A specifically American tone obtrudes in "That dratted owl, I'm afraid of it", and in "trouble tags behind" for the sombre "after me is disaster". In a few instances the translation goes astray. Akhmatova's famous fringe is replaced by "bangs"; the gloom of avenues yields to "twilight hedgerows"; in the poem about her visit at Voronezh to the exiled Mandelstam "St Peter's steeple" ousts "Peter's statue in the square" (Kunitz and Hayward) – the Tsar built a *flotilla* there. Very rarely the diction takes too much licence. "The clawing wild roses, alas! / Go with this, hand in glove" overstrains Akhmatova's simple words: "The roses near Moscow / Alas! have some part in this". Nor would the poet have countenanced such deplorable and glaring inventions as "asphely" and "insomniest pillows".

The skill of translation lies not in the impossible pursuit of identity but in getting a good likeness. The translator should not be asked to give up his or her individual voice, unless it is plainly discordant from the original, in which case the enterprise is hopeless. In this collection (which, one should add, was well chosen to convey Akhmatova's range), there are some splendid moments when an equivalent has been won. Let the reader turn to the translation of Akhmatova's poem "In Memory of Mikhail Bulgakov". It hasn't the lingering ex-cadence of the Russian, which uses an exquisite elegiac metre of Pushkin's. There are certain modifications in phrasing. But it arrests the attention, as this extract will show:

no one says a thing  
About your bitter and beautiful life;  
Only my flute-like voice will sing  
At this, your silent funeral feast.  
It's unbelievable, you say to least,  
That I, half-mad, mourning the past,  
Smouldering on top of the slowest coal,  
Having lost everything and forgotten them all,  
Am fated to commemorate someone so strong,  
Bright and steady to the final breath.  
Here the nobility and restraint of Akhmatova unquestionably shine through.

## Going Greek

Michael Hofmann

AMANDA HEMINGWAY  
*Tantalus*  
240pp. Hamish Hamilton. £8.95.  
0241 111730

A novel that refers to another, lower-grade artefact that resembles it signals either a playful confidence or a terrible unease on the part of the author. There are two such references in *Tantalus*, and both are too close for comfort. Here is one of them:

For a wild moment, Caroline visualised herself caught up in some ghastly modern play, trapped on a narrow stage with two or three other characters, none of whom she liked, being sucked down into the vortex of the author's psychoneurotic imaginings.

Amanda Hemingway is of course far too sovereign and self-possessed to have "psychoneurotic imaginings" – but then what is she doing writing a book like this? *Tantalus* is a hybrid of a novel: part moral thriller, part satirical social comedy. A lurid and predictable plot – sex and murder – is grafted on to a *milieu*-study of Harley Street, Knightsbridge and a country practice. It is written confidently enough, but it never overcomes its own disunity; hence the reader's embarrassment when the book receives these two internal challenges: "wild moments", moments of truth.

The plot turns on "homosexuality, incest, passion, bitterness, revenge", with two suicides, at the beginning and end. The main constellation is the triangle of Caroline Horvath, her father Stephen, the doctor, and Ulysses, whose "sexual ambiguity" we, like the jury, are invited to find "more understandable in Greek". It is he, a barman encountered on a Greek holiday, who is led back to England to achieve the destruction of Caroline's father who is, she discovers by studying his latest unhappy, minimalist wife, a closet homosexual. Ulysses, led on himself by a rather unaccountable passion for the chilly Caroline, agrees to act as bait, and Stephen is trapped in a homosexual affair that gradually ruins his public and professional life. Hemingway's description of this affair, and of the deaths, are vague rather than vivid. In the end, Ulysses kills Stephen, apparently without malice or thought, and the universal Scotland Yard

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PHAIDON



# In with the Simla pinks

Robert Brain

BALRAJ KHANNA  
Nation of Fools: Scenes from Indian Life  
252pp. Michael Joseph. £8.95.  
07181 23875.

Balraj Khanna's *Nation of Fools* is a pleasing sketch of Punjabi life in and around Chandigarh in the mid-1950s, when both the author and his "scallywag" hero were in their teens. The book may be fairly described as a novel in the traditional Indian picaresque manner: Omi Khatri, like another wayward character in Indian fiction - Jagan's son in R. K. Narayan's *The Vendor of Sweets* - is the spoilt and only son of an industrious confectioner. Omi gets into and out of a lot of scrapes while his dignified and forgiving father builds up his business, moves his family from a camp slum to the capital city and finds his son a profitable bride. Eventually Khatri senior's patience is rewarded: Omi's wild oats are sown and he obediently takes over his father's business and marries the station master's daughter, whom he never sees before the wedding.

Omi fights with his friends, taunts his schoolmasters, steals from the till to go to the cinema, takes reckless rides in his father-in-law's motorized railway trolley, gate-crashes grand weddings for the sake of the delicious food, and joins a fast crowd of wealthy sons and daughters of the Punjab elite for more elegant and erotic pastimes. This crowd - known as the Simla pinks from their fresh complexions acquired at public schools in the hills - are mad for anything not Indian, adopting Anglicized names such as Sally and Betty and Sue; for a time Omi becomes Aimee. Omi's wildest prank occurs when he stumbles across a naked woman praying for children in front of a Devi

goddess. "God came into Omi" and he loses his virginity as a counterfeit spirit of the shrine.

*Nation of Fools* is a funny, irreverent book. In the accepted picaresque manner, no judgments are made: Omi and his friends cast a casual eye on the marching Sikhs and Brahmins during the language riots, and take only a passing interest in the protests of underpaid Untouchables because the women in their rags show a good deal of breast. Yet although we are not pressed to delve into the issues of revolution, good and evil, wealth and poverty, Balraj Khanna has a sharp eye for the ironies of daily life and a keen ear for its language. Hindu religious concepts are dealt with at a domestic level; we see dreaded taboos lightly transgressed and pollution easily borne. A married couple eat together and indulge in erotic embraces; a family adapts to an indoor toilet - next to the kitchen! - in one of Le Corbusier's cement boxes, "only fit for pigeons"; Brahmin neighbours come across as tiresome, old-fashioned snobs; and Untouchable servants are fit prey for a well-beeled young man's lust. Exotic Hindu religion becomes as pragmatic as our Anglican way: Khatri senior moves off into the tree-clad hills to visit his guru each time his business hiccups, and he always comes back with the right commercial answers.

A likeable - even a lovable - first novel, *Nation of Fools* is written in a lively, unshackled English. Apart from the cool narrative, Khanna attempts to capture the nuances of many different kinds of speech - between school friends, between Simla pinks, between Punjabi-speakers, Punjabi-speakers speaking English and so on. He does this not only through a lavish use of translated idiom and untranslated Punjabi words (like the luscious-looking names of the Khatri confectionery) but also an almost indiscernible lilt in the dialogue.

# Ghosts on the ward

Laura Marcus

WENDY LAW-YONE  
The Coffin Tree  
195pp. Cape. £8.50.  
0224029630

The narrator-protagonist of Wendy Law-Yone's *The Coffin Tree*, arriving in America at the age of twenty after a childhood spent in the "small, bypassed land" of Burma, finds that her former world is so little transferable that she cannot even pass judgment on the new. Her family, with the exception of her older half-brother Shan, have remained behind to face the aftermath of the Burmese military coup. Living in squalid digs, brother and sister, friendless and soon penniless, retreat into their private worlds. Shan, caught in a past he reconstructs as idyllic, becomes prey to paranoid fears and fantasies, and dies within a few years of their arrival. His sister, in near-total isolation, cut off from past and future, attempts suicide and is sent to a mental institution. There the dreams and memories she allows to re-enter her imagination enable her to forge links between past life and present, and to come to some kind of reconciliation with existence.

If this sounds unbearably depressing, it should be said that the novel sparks into life in the sections describing Burma: stories told to the narrator by her brother of village and jungle encounters with mythical beings, half-woman and half-snake; her own memories of her terrifying, grandmotherly, her convent education in a Buddhist country, her meeting with the opium-crazed fortune-teller who tells her of the rare coffin tree which is to become her brother's *ultima thule* when he leaves Burma. In hospital, she attempts to negotiate the difficult distinction between fantasies as gulfing fictions and as the products of madness and interpolated memories and legends of Burma gain power by contrast with the less happily ritualized life of the mental ward.

In the latter part of the novel the author's real energies are engaged with the effects of family relationships on her protagonists' later struggles. The narrator says of the institution: "Our fathers! Their ghosts hovered around us in that ward. I was part of that little community

of wronged children." Her own father, absent for much of her childhood, the powerful and at times brutal general of the rebel army in Burma, froze responses as effectively as the snow that in this novel seems to permanently cover America. The family as the cause of psychic conflict enters the scene again. Taken together with the themes of cultural deracination and political crisis, the narrator's problems can begin to seem a little overdetermined.

By contrast, the narrator herself is something of a transparency, at no point named and difficult to envisage. The solipsism of this "I" contributes to the impression that *The Coffin Tree* has too much of the feel and structure of an autobiography; the density of the specific moment is on occasions sacrificed to the necessity of charting the passing of time, while a certain flatness of tone prevails in the scenes describing life in America - as of anecdotes too often repeated. Elsewhere in the novel there is writing of considerable force. Childhood fears and perceptions are given the immediacy of dreams: "Inside the Church of St Teresa, the priest leading us through our first communion performed his own brand of black magic, heartily swirling the blood of Christ in the shiny goblet, downing it with relish, and wiping his stained lips with a crisp napkin, as after a robust meal." This world, both black and brightly coloured, provides the basis for a compelling first novel.

March is designated a "literary month" at the Riverside Studios, "Crisp Road, Hammer-smith, London W6, and events taking place there are to include on Sunday March 11 at 4pm, Professor Richard Ellmann speaking on his biography of James Joyce, the revised and enlarged edition of which was published in 1982 (and reviewed in the TLS for December 17 of that year) on March 11 at 7.30pm, "Three Times Three", a workshop performance of a new play by Edmund White, which will have its world premiere at the Riverside, on Thursday March 15 at 7.30pm. Nizake Shange reading from her novel *Sassafras, Cypress and Indigo* on Saturday March 17 at 8.00pm, Norman Thomas di Giovanni, the translator of Jorge Luis Borges, talking about Borges's work, and on Sunday March 18 at 4.30 pm, Margaret Atwood reading from her new book *Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale*.

## Denver Airport

If we appear at such moments a nation  
Of maniacs locked into fantasies all  
As wacky as the born-again's hope  
Of literally living after he's dead,  
Perhaps it is useful. Perhaps  
That paraplegic cowboy in the wheelchair  
Simulating violence in the penny arcade  
Is a kind of warning salvo to enemy hombres,  
A skull-and-crossbones lovingly embroidered  
On a sleeveless Levi jacket with, below it,  
Our boys' motto, "More Berserk Than Thou."  
Such silliness is threatening,  
Such willingness to pump adrenalin  
Down the exhausted wells to force  
Some last ounce of authentic energy  
Up to the crazed surface of the eye.

And I, in my whitewashed shoes, am I  
Less dangerous than other businessmen  
Along this concourse? Are my desires  
Less disorganized, my heart more sane?  
Of course not: we're all monsters  
Together, whose every smile reveals  
A possible vampire. For now, however,  
I'm content to feed my lazy id  
Its daily ration of news as it oozes  
From the airport's perpetual TV. No need  
To turn to that girl seducing  
Guileless travellers on behalf  
Of her hindoo god, no need to sign on  
As a mercenary in the army of conscious  
Reaction, no need to plunder, rape, or murder  
When I'm so well-supplied at every viewing  
With the methadone of my vicarious crimes.  
Why, only last night a man confessed  
To a spree of no less than thirty  
Killings, and when the amorous  
Newscaster asked what warning he offered  
The youth of the nation, he solemnly replied:  
"Don't drink. Don't smoke pot."

Another drink at the Timberline.  
My plane's delayed an hour. The gin  
Unlocks a benign tolerance for this land  
Of languid, licensed water sprinklers,  
For the brave rickety vans of teenagers  
Going up one side of the continental divide  
And down, like the fabled bear, the other.  
It's all here to be applauded:  
The purple majesty, the fruited plain,  
The safe, soft air-conditioned bar.  
Truly, I worry unduly. Most lunatics  
Will accept a polite no-thank-you  
In reply to their offer of a free LP,  
Just as an umbrella suffices for most forms  
Of storms. Tornadoes do happen, of course,  
And the only answer's to get on your horse  
And skidaddle eastward with a final fond  
Ya-hoo! to the waitress who has been so kind.

TOM DISCH

"Denver Airport" is included in Tom Disch's new volume *Here I Am, There You Are, Where Were We, Which is published this week and is a Poetry Book Society Choice. The book will be reviewed in a forthcoming issue of the TLS.*



Peabody the bear, back among the toys, without his specialness and with a cobweb. One of Rosemary Wells's illustrations to her new picture book, *Peabody* (Macmillan, £5.95, 0 333 36275 6), which tells the classic story of the old toy neglected for the new. Peabody's obvious niceness ensures a happy ending.

## Mechanical minds

Sarah Wintle

PETER NICKL and BINETTE SCHROEDER  
*Ra-ta-tam*: The strange story of a little engine  
Translated by Michael Bullock.  
Cape. £4.95.  
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Kestrel. £5.95.  
07226 6482 6

Machines are the central characters of both these books, although they are each in their separate ways concerned also with ultimate values, the spiritual desolation of the adult world of industry, commerce and science, God, and other important questions. Consequently the picture of the ideal reader oscillates uncertainly between a five to eight-year-old with a fine intuitive grasp of the moral life, and anyone grown up and literate. It is, however, perhaps those over thirty-five or so who will be able to respond most fully to the evocative title *Ra-ta-tam*. The continuing popularity of the steam engine in children's books is witness not only to parental and authorial nostalgia, but also to an uncertainty about what kind of relationship we should establish between our children and our technology.

The little engine of Nickl and Schroeder's book is the hero of a semi-allegorical romance. Its adventures take it (the neuter pronoun is the book's) from a townscape dominated by factory chimneys, puffs of smoke and ill-tempered industrialists to a pure-white mountain-fairness "inhabited by little people with friendly faces". The designer and builder of the little engine, Matthew Tiny, looks at first as if he will establish links with the scientific world for he is "very very clever. He solved the most difficult arithmetic problems with his left hand, and at the same time he built the most extraordinary things with his right." However, when his engine is appropriated as a garden ornament by the factory owner, Tiny decamps. His engine breaks out of its garden prison, traverses mountains and "a wide wilderness", sojourns for a time in a black city where it works "in the depths of the earth" digging "black gold", until it is black itself. It escapes, is pursued by "enormous black engines" until "a terrible storm of rain" washes it white again, so it can slip its pursuers to be re-united in a snowy village with its beloved Matthew Tiny.

The real strength of this book lies in its evocative illustrations. The writing never quite matches the stark use of romance, romance and a whiff of Toytown. But Binette Schroeder has used hints of de Chirico, Mag-

ritte, Dali and even Bosch to create a series of haunting, even frightening images which express beautifully the implications of the story. The industrialist's garden is a de Chirico-like place of moonlight and disturbing off-centre perspectives, while the demonic black engines burst out of a flat landscape so patterned by cooling towers and wind-blown smoke that it is frighteningly obvious that one more engine is hidden behind a tower and others still lurk off the page. The plot, however, with its journey from city to mountain valley is a regressive denial of any steam engine's origins.

The same anxiety about machines is obvious in Jenny Wagner's *The Machine at the Heart of the World* which is a fable about the direct link between innocent childish directness and cosmic order. The machine, which is run by a shabby and slightly capricious character called Theobald, is a combination of a bicycle and medieval astronomical clock. The story is told in a portentous manner which risks coy obscurity but aims at being deeply suggestive. When "the boy" discovers the existence of the machine, adults quickly take it over to ensure fulfilment of their every selfish wish. Chaos ensues which scientists make worse. "The boy" who gets Theobald out of his bed and pedalling again.

The illustrations are pretty and hint at depth: an adult character is dressed as Napoleon and the resumption of order is signalled by a rainbow. The whole, with its rather irritating pretentiousness remains unfocused. None the less the book does offer a simple mechanistic explanation of the functioning of the universe in contrast to the abstractions children are usually given.

The Museum of Modern Art, Oxford has announced that it will be holding an exhibition of original illustrations from children's books which will take place from June 24 to July 29. The exhibition will bring together the work of over sixty artists currently working in children's books. Proceeds from the exhibition and from the sale of original artwork and the catalogue will go to the NSPCC Centenary Appeal. Further information can be obtained from Rona Treglown, Museum of Modern Art, 30 Pembroke Street, Oxford.

Church Farm House Museum, Hendon is currently holding an exhibition of nineteenth and twentieth-century illustrated children's books from a local private collection made by Rosalind Berwald. The exhibition, which covers the work of artists from Arthur Rackham to Nicola Bayley, will run until March 25. Further information is available from D. A. Ruddom, Church Farm House Museum, Greyhound Hill, Hendon, London NW4 4JR.

## In the wilds

Geoffrey Trease

VICTOR KELLEHER  
*Papio*  
A Novel of Adventure.  
176pp. Kestrel. £6.95.  
07226 58974  
ELIZABETH GEORGE SPEARE  
*The Sign of the Beaver*  
135pp. Gollancz. £5.95.  
0575 034181

Both these stories deal with the time-honoured situation of civilized children having to fend for themselves in a primitive environment. Victor Kelleher, himself Australian, lays his scene in Central Africa with a vividness that suggests familiarity. In choosing as his theme experiments on animals he has found one that excites a deep emotional reaction in young people and he leaves no doubt of his own intense commitment. There may be a little more calculated market-study in his pairing off as main characters a white boy and a black girl. The latter has to be his American schoolfellow to make their friendship more plausible.

The two fourteen-year-olds, David and Jem, are moved by the misery of two baboons, Papio and Upi, at the local research-station. Letting them out during the night, they drive them by Land Rover to a suitably isolated spot and set them free - only to find to their embarrassment that the affectionate animals refuse to desert them. In the days, and eventually weeks, that follow, the conscientious teenagers have to traipse about the Zambesi escarpment, first helping the fugitives to attain social acceptance by a troop of wild fellow-baboons, and then (as

white hunters threaten the whole group) taking responsibility for their safety as well.

It is an original, often exciting story, flawed only by this basic improbability. Mr Kelleher tries hard to explain the children's behaviour, which hardens into positive misanthropy when they behave abominably to harmless African villagers. He makes David, the unhappy child of a broken marriage, seek in the baboon colony the "family" he has lost, while Jem by contrast is an over-strained elder sister reacting against an excess of home life. The children sometimes converse in non-colloquial adult terms, like "They'll never again be exposed to that sort of pointless cruelty." I found them far less credible than Mr Kelleher's baboons.

More traditional attitudes are reflected in *The Sign of the Beaver*, with which Elizabeth George Speare, a New England writer whose uneven reputation rests on a very small output, breaks isolation after twenty years. Now we are in isolated Indian country, the woods of Maine in 1768. Young Matt is left alone in a new-built cabin while his father goes back to fetch the family from Massachusetts. The expected six-weeks absence lengthens into months. Matt survives only through the (at first reluctant) friendship of an Indian boy.

Mrs Speare, an authority on early colonial life, tells a competent if conventional story which is interesting and convincing (though it is surprising to find even the Indian girls with some knowledge of English). The contrast of cultures is made effectively and sympathetically. And with a refreshing disregard of ideological critics who might hint darkly at sexist attitudes, Mrs Speare happily allows her Indian boy to speak disparagingly of "squaw's work" - as of course he would.

## Amiable eccentrics

Pat Raine

JUDITH O'NEILL  
*Jess and the River Kids*  
19pp. Hamish Hamilton. £5.50.  
0241 111838

Jess, a thirteen-year-old Australian, does a lot of messing about on the banks of a river ("She never tired of looking at it"). Here, on a hot January day in 1943, she meets a couple of sturdy brothers, younger than herself, and establishes a kind of friendship with them. Their unsatisfactory parents have left Kenny and Snowy in the charge of an old English-woman called Lizzie, who lives on a houseboat. To this unorthodox dwelling-place Jess becomes an enthusiastic Sunday visitor. She is soon captivated by old Lizzie, who is deaf, and who talks loudly about her childhood in the north of England.

Jess sits enthralled, mousing questions at old Lizzie, rather to the annoyance of the boys who are obliged to remind her that she is *their* guest: "We want you to play with us." A compromise is reached, with Jess spending half the

afternoon with Lizzie, and the other half constructing "a very secret hut" with Kenny and Snowy. One day, a lot of rough boys on bicycles stop Jess on her way home and advise her to steer clear of the river: "You'd better look out, kid, or you'll be in trouble." Trouble ensues, sure enough, with Lizzie's houseboat set on fire, and set adrift, and Lizzie herself obliged to take a midnight swim in her long flannel nightdress. A gold nugget, fashioned into a brooch, the boys' only valuable possession, disappears into the bargain and causes some consternation before it is recovered.

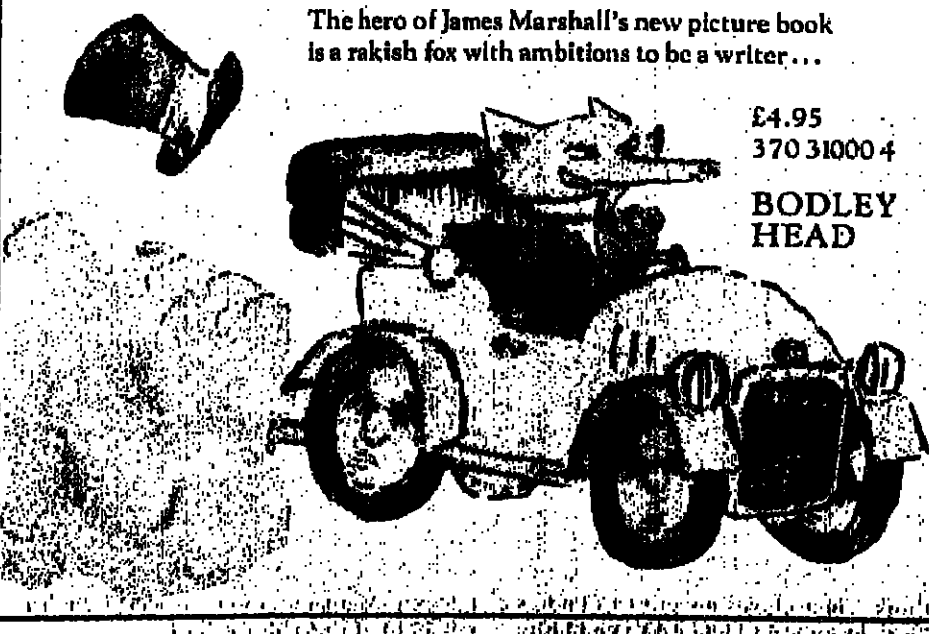
None of this is very exciting, oddly enough. Banality quickly overtakes the descriptions of life in an Australian country town ("The blockies were all in town for their Saturday shopping..."), the narrative tone remains cosy throughout and the events are not fashioned to grip the imagination. Truly, we can't comprehend deaf Lizzie's fascination. It is plain that she's meant to be an amiably eccentric individual, but the portrait isn't sufficiently sharp to make her memorable or even convincing. As for the rest of them - well, by and large they're as lifeless as the palm trees painted at school by the inartistic Jess.

## Rapscallion Jones

The hero of James Marshall's new picture book is a rakish fox with ambitions to be a writer...

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# Natural archetypes

Mark Ridley

PHILIP F. REHBOCK  
The Philosophical Naturalists: Themes in Early Nineteenth-Century British Biology  
281pp. University of Wisconsin Press. £25.50. 0299094308

Idealism, which Philip F. Rehbock begins his book by defining as "the metaphysical doctrine that ideas and minds are the fundamental realities and that matter – nature, the physical world – is secondary", has influenced continental thought more than British. When introduced into biology in the early nineteenth century, idealism produced what is called transcendental morphology. That is, the doctrine that the different anatomies of different species are variations of a small number (or even only one) of ideal plans or types.

Transcendental morphology has German origins, but it quickly (if only partially) captured Paris and from then on, through the 1820s and 1830s, the Parisian school of Geoffroy Sainte-Hilaire was its export centre. Rehbock (in the first and larger part of his two-part book) is concerned with transcendental morphology in Great Britain. Its influence within Britain before Darwin is now quite well known to historians of the subject, but Rehbock has researched some little-known areas and brought back some unappreciated facts.

One is that "the leading idealist naturalists [in Great Britain] were predominantly Scottish or had an Edinburgh training". This fact Rehbock would explain mainly by the influence of one man, the "eloquent but forgotten" anatomist Robert Knox. Knox, having studied in Edinburgh, visited the morphologists of Paris in 1821. He returned to Edinburgh next

year, a changed man. He had been filled with enthusiasm for the transcendental philosophy. It inspired his lectures (which continued until 1842). Later it would inform his writings. He taught that zoology must become philosophical. It must learn to operate the techniques of Paris. Let British zoology set aside its labels and its specimen tubes. Let the suffocating confusion and meaningless diversity of the museum collections be exchanged for the transcendental abstraction of the Unity of Type. But the stick-in-the-muds took no notice: only his students were responsive. Indeed, Knox's school flourished for a while in Edinburgh, and Rehbock lists an impressive number of "the leading lights of mid-century British science" (as he exaggeratingly calls them) who attended Knox's lectures.

The list includes Edward Forbes and "possibly" Richard Owen. Owen is the biggest fish in the pond, and Rehbock works hard to persuade us that he had been nurtured by Knox. He is not fully convincing. Owen probably learned his idealism more from William Whewell (whom he had known since school) and a visit to Paris than from Knox. Forbes fits Rehbock's scheme rather better, as indeed he should, for the author tells us that this work is the follow-up to a study of Forbes. Forbes also had visited Paris.

Besides the archetypes of Owen, the main achievement of transcendental morphology that is still remembered by biologists is the quinary system of MacLeay. It had, at all levels of the classificatory hierarchy, five sub-groups per group: five species per genus, five genera per family, and so on up to the five main classes of animals, which were vertebrates, insects, molluscs, Radiata, and Acrita (polyps and worms). Modern taxonomical controversialists often discover that the systems of their opponents resemble that of MacLeay, but

Rehbock's review may allow in future a greater range of unflattering comparison. His philosophical naturalists appear to have been more philosophers than naturalists (no taxonomic terms in his index, but plenty of *-isms*), and not very good philosophers at that. If MacLeay observed that groups came in fives, his popularizer William Swainson provided evidence that "the ruling number was three, five being secondary" and Edward Norman preferred the "Septennial System" that he had devised. John Goodsir invented a morphology which explained all the forms of animals as combinations of triangles. The tradition culminates in Forbes's mystical "theory of polarity", which (according to Darwin) was "absolutely unintelligible". But Forbes had foreseen objections like that. In the last paragraph of the paper he had warned those readers "unaccustomed to look upon natural history questions in the abstract" that they might find his views "fanciful and perhaps obscure". I only wish I knew where on his copy of the paper Darwin had written his remark.

By 1860, Rehbock says, "the movement had run its course". In biology, idealism succumbed with all the other forms of "creationism" in the general disaster precipitated by Darwin. Owen's ideal archetypes did survive the revolution, but rudely re-formed as historical ancestors. Owen survived it too, unfortunately for his reputation, because he is now

mainly remembered for his bad-mannered and completely unsuccessful attacks on Darwin's theory.

Biogeography is the subject of the second part of the book. One chapter covers the local distributions of animals, the other global distributions. They are narrower than the earlier chapters, as Forbes takes up an increasingly disproportionate share of the space. The chapter on global biogeography is in fact almost entirely concerned with a single paper in which Forbes described five floral regions in Great Britain and attributed them to five separate phases of migration, "facilitated by land bridges". Rehbock believes that "this innovative and highly controversial essay... was the most significant document in the early development of historical biogeography prior to Darwin's *Origin*". I do not. The ideas were all in Lyell, and the facts copied from Watson. As for the controversy, it was entirely concerned with matters of priority. (Forbes did not cite Watson in the first version of his paper, and did not cite Lyell at all. They pointed out the omissions; Lyell gracefully, Watson offensively.)

The book is written for a professional audience. Historians of biology, and any morphologists, taxonomists, biogeographers, and perhaps ecologists who are interested in the history of their subjects, may all learn something, pleasantly erudite perhaps, from Rehbock.

## Shots from a loose cannon

Richard Dawkins

P.B. MEDAWAR and J.S. MEDAWAR  
Aristotle to Zoos: A Philosophical Dictionary of Biology  
305pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £15. 0297 78297 5

One could, I suppose, detect an element of self-indulgence in the conception of this book. When you know a lot about a subject and want to write a book about it, notoriously the most difficult part of the enterprise is deciding in what order to arrange the parts. Begin by explaining X, and you suddenly realize that your readers need prior knowledge of Y. But then of course they can't really appreciate Y until they know about X. The easiest way out of the dilemma is to ignore it and simply arrange your topics in alphabetical order. You have to call it a dictionary or encyclopedia of course, and you can avoid the responsibility for comprehensive coverage which these labels would seem to demand, by the ingenious device of announcing in your preface that your book is *not* comprehensive: "not for reference and not for looking up things... It is for browsing."

The conception may be self-indulgent, but it is still possible to make it work. If the sections are arranged in alphabetical order – which is tantamount to random order in a book that is not a work of reference – you just have to make the sections themselves that much more brilliant than the average. Your wit must be wittier, and your wisdom wiser, if you are to get away with it. Fortunately in the Medawars' case it is, and it is, and they do. Indeed it is the measure of the skill of the Medawars' prose that you can choose it at random and find it brilliantly enjoyable.

Lamarckian inheritance seems to those who believe in it to be so obviously, so necessarily, and so self-evidently true that they can develop a strong sense of grievance against nature when it does not cooperate with the experimenter who sets up a system intended to demonstrate the inheritance of acquired characteristics. This sense of grievance has at least once taken the form of helping nature to produce the right results.

On the same page we have Lemmings. Realized, stumpy-tailed rodents of the Arctic or north temperate zones, lemmings are noteworthy for their remarkable fluctuations of population size, and for having given rise to the myth (famously akin to that of the Goshawk) that lemmings commit ritual suicide by jumping over the cliffs into the sea. One would have to go back to the travelers (the book is split in American tales of the seventeenth century, or even to Aristotle, to light upon another misconception as comically erroneous.

The Medawars are too charitable to mention Walt Disney's role in perpetuating this myth. Even had lemmings charged over cliffs when

they, understandably enough, would not perform their mythic role for his cameras. Then, still within the Ls:

There is no question of right or wrong about Lysenkoism: it is wrong. Lysenko emerges as the most significant figure in the Soviet science of the twentieth century. His influence was malignant, and his most spectacular accomplishment was to bring genetics in Russia to a standstill.

This forthrightness contrasts refreshingly with the mealy-mouthed apologetics of Western Marxist biologists at the time, and even today an exhibition of craven gullibility which the Medawars, again charitably, refrain from recalling.

It is, of course, too much to hope that there would not be occasional lapses: the authors' antipathy towards R. A. Fisher spills over into pettiness; the story of Haldane's eight cousins has become a cliché; and the slightly bullying tone with which the Medawars establish themselves on the side of the angels in issues like race, IQ and eugenics has an air of protesting too much. An American colleague went so far as to describe Sir Peter as a "loose cannon on deck", the allusion being to a gun of immense firepower, sometimes directed in successful broadsides against the enemy, but capable of careering round and shooting up its own bridge. But in the vast majority of cases the targets of a Medawar cannonade thoroughly deserve everything they get.

I would not want to suggest that the only merit of the book is its gleefully opinionated, Johnian wit. There is sober wisdom too, and authoritative, un-Johnsonian knowledge. The explanations of the mathematics of growth and form, and of demography, are as helpful to the student as any that I have seen. The entries on medical and social subjects are balanced and humane. To be sure, the choice of topics is idiosyncratic, even capricious. Why is there no entry on...? Or on...? Never mind, some of the omissions are so conspicuous that they must be deliberate – and are impeccable. Television producers will search in vain for even the smallest mention of their manufactured "weaknesses of Darwinism". "Transformed did-ism" is accorded its proper and rightful place in the scheme of things: it is totally ignored.

But finally, it is for its style that this book must be recommended. There is a lofty arrogance about the aphorisms which in almost anybody else would be offensive. The Medawars are able to get away with arrogance and make it hugely enjoyable. We are granted the pleasure of seeing in print (though much better expressed) the things that we would wish to say ourselves, if we dared.

The biological works of Aristotle are a strange and generally speaking rather tiresome (farrago of hearsay, imperfect observation, wishful thinking, and credulity amounting to downright gullibility).

# The underground infrastructure

Asa Briggs

DAVID OWEN  
The Government of Victorian London 1855–1889: The Metropolitan Board of Works, the Vestries, and the City Corporation  
Edited by Roy MacLeod  
466pp. Harvard University Press. £12.50. 0674 35883 6  
JACK REYNOLDS  
The Great Paternalist: Titus Salt and the growth of nineteenth-century Bradford  
382pp. Temple Smith. £16. 0851 17230 X

Among historians of Victorian Britain, David Owen, who taught British history at Harvard, has a very special place. He was a dedicated teacher, who in his wry but sympathetic way gripped the attention of most of the students, above all perhaps the undergraduates, who listened to his lectures; and inspired some of the most zealous of them to become professional historians of Britain themselves. He was particularly interested not in obvious themes but in what seemed to him important topics which other historians had neglected, and it was for this reason that he produced his massive study of English philanthropy from 1660 to 1960, which stretches far back before the Victorian period he knew best and moves forward into a twentieth century which had its own distinctive appeal for him. His unfinished study of Victorian London, completed by other caring hands, will be generally regarded as a worthy successor. As he himself always acknowledged, he began it not as a contribution to urban or metropolitan history, but as a by-product of his work on nineteenth-century charities.

No one really knew, Owen gradually came to realize as he wrote that earlier book, how London, Europe's biggest city, more often described than interpreted, had been administered during two thirds of the nineteenth century. He wanted to find out, therefore, and what better topic to turn to in order to do so than the history of an unloved as well as neglected institution: the Metropolitan Board of Works, founded in 1855, which owed its immediate existence to a crisis not in politics or in economics but in drainage? One chapter is aptly called "The Odor of Corruption" – and no reader will be surprised by that – but the MBW, as Owen refers to it throughout, deserves better, particularly of historians, than it has usually been accorded. The problems of interpretation began at the time. The Board was doomed to carry out its operations in "an atmosphere of impermanence", and by reason of the intransigent nature of those problems it seldom succeeded in mastering them. When, therefore, it was eventually superseded by the London County Council, a body never without its own critics, in 1889, *Punch* bade it farewell with a cartoon which is better remembered than the MBW's own record of achievement – "Peace to its Hashes", which claimed *inter alia* that the MBW had shown the world "how jobbery could be elevated to the level of the fine arts".

For *The Times*, at the end of the story, London was "well rid of a body which was so blind to its own dignity, to the plainest precepts of public duty, indeed to the ordinary restraints of public decency". Yet *The Times* had not always argued that way. Owen exaggerates when he says that it hailed nearly every one of the MBW's annual reports with enthusiasm, but it is certainly true, as he points out, that it could conclude more than once, as it did, for example, in 1862, that the Board had "discharged its very difficult tasks with as much success as could reasonably be expected". "To its good deeds," its obituary notice read in 1889, "justice will long do be done. On its bad deeds... the most merciful verdict is silence." Owen belatedly metes out justice, ignoring neither the good nor the bad, so that "The Odor of Corruption" is balanced (or very nearly) by "The Problem of Main Drainage" and by "The Embankment".

It is left to those who completed the book, however, to suggest that justice can only finally be done to the Board if its own shortcomings be related to the bigger shortcomings – and achievements – of Victorian society. As Donald Owen remarks in his acute, though

sketchy, introduction, "For whatever combination of reasons – the sublime self-confidence, bordering on arrogance, of the Victorians, a disinclination to spend money on display that might otherwise go into a productive capital investment, a genuine aversion to the monumental, or a reluctance to subject individual builders to stringent architectural controls – London took a path markedly different from that of the great Continental capitals in the nineteenth century." Moreover, the failure of the Victorians to make London "the outward representation of national power and imperial purpose came from their disenchantment with an earlier attempt to do just that".

In his admirable Conclusion, David Reeder concentrates more fully on the failure in itself, quoting forgotten words of G. C. Brodric which get near to a just verdict: "By reason of its mere size and population, London is incapable of being governed like an ordinary borough, whatever constitution may be imposed upon it..."

The LCC, endowed with greater powers and composed of directly elected representatives, was to do far more than the MBW. Indeed, at its best, it was to stimulate a general Cockney pride in the city as a whole as well as in its local parts. Unfortunately, Owen did not have time to explore such contrasts or the continuities which went with them. Yet his own text concludes with a highly relevant cluster of chapters on "vestrydom", an institution which never even asked for justice, where he looks in detail – although not, alas, in a Namierite way – at three vestries among "the motley lot": the City Corporation, St Marylebone and St George the Martyr, Southwark. Since the MBW was composed of forty-five members, twenty-eight of whom were elected by the various vestries and three by the City, the quality of its achievement depended in the first, if not in the last, resort on vestrymen. One of these, at least, Sir John Thwaites, Chairman of the Board from 1858 to his death in 1870, was a forceful, if uninspiring, character in the "Senate of Sewers".

Yet neither he, returned as he was from two vestries, Southwark and Greenwich, nor the members were free agents. Their constituencies were interested above all else in limited and low-cost administration. Thwaites had the knowledge and judgment to see that a faulty rating principle placed the heaviest burden on those least able to bear it, but if he had been anxious to spend more money on the Board he would never have been elected to it, let alone be chosen to serve as its Chairman. The fear of leaving decisions to committees, which was always shown by the Board, showed how jealous it was of any person or of any group having too much power to dispose of funds. Moreover, because of such attributes the Board could seldom attract officials of the highest calibre on whom its quality ultimately depended. The mere mention of the words "increase of salary" was calculated, Owen points out, to raise the blood pressure of the favourite "Economic Member" entrusted by his vestry to maintain economy rather than press for efficiency.

Of course, if there was too little efficiency, there were grumbles. Yet equally significantly, even when the Board succeeded in reconciling economy and efficiency, there were suspicions of the results of its labours: it seemed to be too big for its shoes. The Londoners most able to bear the city's burdens wanted the best of every world. Owen insists throughout, therefore, that the character of the parishes in the metropolis "with their intertwined confusion and their stubborn localism greatly hindered the development of a rational form of municipal government in nineteenth-century London". Yet it is Reeder, not Owen, who quotes the inexorable judgment of Henry Jephson, ex-member of the LCC, in his monumental *Sanitary Evolution of London* (1907): "The all-compelling motive and unceasing desire for 'commercial prosperity and success' were the main driving force in Victorian London. 'That indispensable fact', he added, 'most constantly borne in mind as one reviews the sanitary and social condition of the people of London.'"

From such a bare summary, it is obvious enough that the MBW was not an easy subject to study from the vantage-point of twentieth-century Harvard. Nor did it greatly appeal as a subject to many of Owen's distinguished

fellow-historians there. Yet Owen completed enough of his research, the substantial body of the work indeed, to establish the importance of the subject, to chart much that had previously been uncharted in the life of a great city, and to make it possible for Roy MacLeod to edit his manuscript, for Olsen to introduce it, for Francis Sheppard to fill in missing parts, including useful chapters on the St Pancras and St Leonard, Shoreditch, vestries which Owen had identified for separate treatment, and for Reeder to write his concise and cogent conclusion, setting the whole work (and the work of the MBW) in perspective. In it Reeder relates what Owen has written to the experience of other governmental institutions in London in the nineteenth century, of British provincial cities during the same period and, albeit briefly, of metropolitan cities in other parts of the world. However, apart from a few early asides by Olsen, the favourite Victorian contrast between London and Paris is missing from the volume. Nor is there any further reference to Napoleon III. The view across the Channel, as François Bédarida has shown, can be even more illuminating than the view across the Atlantic, when urban processes and their relationship to structures are under review.

So, too, can the Victorian view from industrial Bradford, three miles from which Sir Titus Salt built an industrial settlement named after him. It attracted visitors from all over the world, including the Burmese and Japanese ambassadors in 1872, a year when the MBW was squabbling with the Government about land between Whitehall Gardens and Whitehall Place – the MBW always had Parliament and the Government to contend with as well as the vestries – and when the "chartered" Gas Light and Coke Company was appealing to Parliament in London substantially to raise its rate, as one episode only in what Owen calls the "gas imbroglio" into which the MBW was inevitably drawn. Long before that, Lord Palmerston, mentioned only once in the London study, had flatteringly described a visit to Salthouse as the most remarkable item in his long journey north.

As Reeder suggests, from the vantage-point of the English provinces, Victorian London seemed out of step politically, not much affected by the radical movements of the century or, for that matter, by the main thrust of the Industrial Revolution. Salt, a radical, and a businessman innovator, was certainly never very happy at Westminster. Nor did he want to buy a large estate and live in the country, as many rich Londoners did. In his careful and systematic study, which is more of a general interpretation than a biography, Jack Reynolds spotlights the kind of society and environment which produced first Salt and then Salthouse. It is as much a model study as Salthouse was a model community, for it probes more deeply into social structures than Owen does and draws on a wider range of evidence. It proves, indeed, what was often demonstrated that it is far easier to interpret any other Victorian city than it is Victorian London. The "world's city", which was so wearing, ultimately so impossible, to "govern", in the last analysis defies even the most accomplished and industrious of historians. Bradford, which had at least as many environmental problems and as high a proportion of small-minded people, does not; and Reynolds is able to establish a more satisfactory chronology than Owen as well as a get nearer to the grass-roots of politics.

Part of the reason, of course, is that the Industrial Revolution offers a more manageable, or at least accessible, set of social structures to the historian than those of a great metropolis, and that the political structure of an industrial city like Bradford is more coherent than that of a huge sprawling area like London, where the MBW had nothing to do with education, the poor law or, for that matter, the administration of charities which first drew Owen to the subject. Reynolds, a Bradfordian, who with his own eyes has seen the city change more in his lifetime than it changed in that of Salt, has no difficulty in getting inside its moods as well as its changing structures. He also understands the industry which sustained it. Indeed, it is one of the greatest merits of his study that it treats Salthouse not only in terms of urban history as a different place from Brad-

ford but as "an experiment in industrial relations", explicable only in terms both of Salt's experience and philosophy of industry and of that of his fellow-employers in textiles.

Not surprisingly, these were of more interest, on the whole, to contemporaries than the machinations of London's vestrymen. It was the latter, indeed, not the men of Bradford, who often deserved the adjective "provincial" in a pejorative sense. Salt's life spanned the period when it was possible to use the word in a forceful, proud sense, though Ruskin could point out in Bradford itself the perils of doing so. *The Builder*, which did not restrict its contents to the aesthetics (or costs) of individual buildings, printed an article in 1870 on the "Organisation of Labour" in which it referred to both the pride and the dangers presented by an emerging working class without adequate links to society and the State, an argument which provoked a reply specifically about Salthouse, where, a correspondent wrote, "we may see what can be done by properly organised industry". And the *Bradford Observer* referred to Salt without too much exaggeration in its obituary as "perhaps the greatest captain of industry in England".

Reynolds traces the social chronology of Bradford in familiar enough terms, distinguishing between its years of early growth, its years of crisis (and conflict) from 1834 to 1850, and its years of consensus, 1850 to 1868; and hinting at the years of renewed conflict to come after Salt's death in 1876, when Salthouse itself could be rightly criticized. The MBW, by contrast, does not fit easily into such a framework, although, for all the sense of crisis which produced it, it was as much a child of the 1850s as the LCC, which succeeded it, was a child of the 1880s. In Bradford, as in London, those anxious to mete out justice had to balance the good and the bad, and in both cities a prominent local citizen could complain at the end of the period of a fundamental weakness in the system. E. J. Smith was saying something like Jephson when he wrote that in Victorian times there had been "an absence of ideas and ideals" among men who "had regarded it as their duty to facilitate the making of money whatever became of the loftier purpose of making men".

The critique makes sense. Yet as the contributors to the Owen volume rightly point out, there is little evidence that we have been more successful in the tasks of coping with the city in the late twentieth century than the vestrymen and town councillors of the mid-nineteenth. Indeed, we are still dependent to an alarming extent on a Victorian urban infrastructure which helped in the first instance to provoke such criticism. Parliament, writes Olsen, was "ultimately convinced that London was one and not many". But is it so convinced now? At least the Victorians were prepared to investigate before they produced their answers to acknowledged social problems. Now, in order to deal with what are conceived of as political problems, hasty constitutional changes are made which will complicate administration and finance, not strengthen it. There is a curious topicality about Owen's study, one which he would have been the last to expect and the first to appreciate.

The vision of the city has seldom caught the imagination in Britain of those selected or elected to govern it, although there have been several versions of the "civic gospel" and several generations of highly talented administrators. One reason given by Olsen is that in the late nineteenth century suburbia was too much of a safety valve, just as the attractions of the country house had been in earlier periods. "One might even attempt an adaptation of the 'Turner Thesis', he suggests, 'with cheap land in the London suburbs playing a role analogous to that of free land on the American frontier.' And even Salthouse, where the land was used rather meekly, was well away from the centre of Bradford. There was always an easy escape to Shipley Glen. Moreover, Titus Salt junior treated Salthouse as a suburb of Shipley rather than the unitary community which his father had converted from dream into reality. If the MBW was born in an atmosphere of impermanence, there has not been much in local government or society that has suggested permanence since it disappeared from the scene.

JP 11/10/84



# Models of descent

Nicholas Mann

R. HOWARD BLOCH  
*Etymologies and Genealogies: A Literary Anthropology of the French Middle Ages*  
 282pp. University of Chicago Press. £24.65.  
 0236 05981 2

In the sixty-five years which have elapsed since the first appearance of Johann Huizinga's *Waning of the Middle Ages*, there has been no systematic attempt to rewrite the cultural history of medieval France. This is not so much because Huizinga was right (however brilliant his synthesis) as because the task has become progressively more daunting as the growth of material to be encompassed is matched by the proliferation of new disciplines demanding to be taken into account. Despite a subtitle which suggests a more modest design ("A Literary Anthropology of the French Middle Ages", by which one should understand the twelfth and thirteenth centuries), R. Howard Bloch's study is a genuinely interdisciplinary one, bringing together elements of history, ethnology, philology, philosophy, economics and literature, with the undoubted ambition of generating a new synthesis which will enable us to read the Middle Ages in a different light.

Since Lévi-Strauss, the concept of difference, or "alterity", has become central for the anthropologist, and accordingly it is an essential tenet of Bloch's approach to his subject. At the same time, however, his book will itself undoubtedly possess a certain alterity for many medievalists on this side of the Atlantic, who will be intrigued to learn that the prophet Merlin "embodies the possibility of an anthropology of difference, as outlined by Lévi-Strauss, combined with a grammatological reflection upon the role of language (and of the subject) within such an undertaking, as articulated by Derrida". Nor will they be reassured by what at times appears an almost gratuitous display of interdisciplinary knowledge in the introduction. That philology may be no more than the "initiatory voyage of the medievalist" is clear enough, but that Lounsbury's enigmatic formula expressing the essence of Pannetier kinship is germane to the understanding of medieval France is not. The alterity is linguistic: too. Bloch is an adept of the curiously Gallic hermeneutics of the new scholastics who, like their medieval forebears, have forged a privileged exegetical jargon in which problematizing and fetishizing vie with adequation and imbrication in their zeal to blind the uninitiated with science.

But such unfashionable (not to say old-fashioned) objections, and minor shortcomings such as the occasional mistranslation of Old French texts and the systematic trans-

formation of Alberic of Monte Cassino into Albert, should not be allowed to obscure the fundamental alterity of Bloch's book: its originality as synthesis. Freed of Huizinga's Hegelian yearning for a spirit of the age, the anthropologist in Bloch is never the less concerned to grasp the alien world of the Middle Ages in its entirety, to study the relation between the various orders of knowledge which it displays, and to deduce from them its innermost laws. Furthermore, the *littérateur* in him has recognized, as Huizinga never did, the essential polyvalence of the literary text, and its role not merely as a reflection of the society which produced it, but as a force for change within that society.

Stated simply, and in terms which do justice neither to the density nor to the subtlety of his argument, Bloch's thesis is this: that medieval society perceived itself in terms of a vertical model of descent from origins. This model is articulated etymologically in medieval theories of grammar and language, and is consequently reflected in historical and theological writings: it is also latent in the genealogical structure of the aristocratic family as it began to be organized in France in the twelfth century, and is made manifest in such systems of signs as heraldry and the adoption of patronyms. There is, however, no ideal point of convergence, no theoretical text which reveals the laws of language at work on those of kinship, even if representations of the Tree of Jesse serve as a single (and not wholly satisfactory) image of their coincidence in the arts. Consequently, Bloch turns to the "cultural superstructure", works of literature moulded by grammar, to explore the ways in which they mediate what he sees as the key linear concepts of genealogy and etymology.

While the *chansons de geste* epitomize the genealogical model in an almost impersonal way, emphasizing descent, property and continuation, the love-lyric of the Troubadours is seen as radically disrupting this mode, both linguistically and in terms of the conception of the individual which it implies. Just as the advent of nominalism and modal grammar disrupts the etymological theories of earlier writers, and the development of the "horizontal" household (itself threatened by the adulterous resonances of the lyric) runs counter to the "vertical" notion of lineage. It is finally the romance, or rather a remarkable hybrid labelled the "courtly novel", encompassing in addition to romances texts as diverse as the life of St Alexis, the *Lais* of Marie de France and *Aucassin et Nicolette*, which is seen as mediating between the various tensions, constantly balancing the ideals of filial and narrative continuity against the possibility of their interruption.

One of the two reasons why Bloch considers the Middle Ages so relevant to the modern

world is their concern with the individual; an underlying thesis of his study is that whereas the *chanson de geste* excludes "interiority", the lyric develops and encourages it, and the romance serves "as a guide-book for integrating the hidden self into the public sphere". This is not essentially a new conclusion, though some of the methods by which it is reached undoubtedly are: the conventional borders between most realms of human experience are radically reappraised. So much so indeed that, despite some close analysis in the manner of Paul Zumthor, it is a little disappointing to detect an almost old-fashioned attitude towards genres, which culminates in the creation of an entirely new one. For the chimeric "courtly novel" there can be no justification other than that it is a convenient label with which to unite disparate texts. And it is disappointing too to find exceptional and peculiar texts (such as that of Andreas Capellanus) being quoted as if they were typical and exemplary. To this degree, Bloch's recourse to literature is still that of the historical user rather than the critical reader.

But there is also a great deal of illuminating close reading, inspired by the belief that the other reason why the Middle Ages commend themselves to our attention today is for their intense concern with language. Yet it is symp-

## In their spare time

Brenda Bolton

TERESA McLEAN  
*The English at Play in the Middle Ages*  
 216pp. Kensal Press, Shooter's Lodge,  
 Windsor Forest, Berkshire, SL4 4SY.  
 0946041 067

Those who have read Teresa McLean's historical account of *Medieval English Gardens* will turn eagerly to her new book, *The English at Play*. They may well be disappointed if they expect to find the same scholarly approach as in her earlier book: there is no hint here of any bibliography, hardly a reference in sight and we must be satisfied with a perfunctory three-page index. But if one can tolerate such irritations one will learn much about the sports and other activities with which medieval people filled their leisure, even when they had little of it to speak of.

The book covers all possible aspects of entertainment and sport, from the Anglo-Saxons to the Court of Henry VIII, and records much violence, both on and off the pitch. Medieval spectatorship indeed seems to have been so enthusiastic that it often constituted a secondary participation. Most medieval sports appear as a recreational form of gang warfare,

tomatic of his approach that Bloch should point out that already in the thirteenth century, linguistics was "an aggressive, even imperialistic science generative of its own arguments - a dynamic model capable of integrating any of its constituent parts". One almost has the impression on occasions that he is falling into that sin of excessive emphasis on words which St Augustine condemns as a pitiful servitude, employing a process akin to *anonymatio* in place of argument, pursuing the words of the texts to the limits of their etymologies.

It remains to be seen whether etymology and genealogy are true keys to the past, and not merely brief candles, brightly illuminating the medieval scene. There is some danger that, like the love-lyric, "fornicating with language", this book may so disrupt the norms of literary lineage as to preclude the possibility of any progeny. But it is an ingenious and compelling synthesis which no medievalist, even on this side of the Atlantic, can afford to ignore. Like the prophet Merlin, who opens and closes his study, Bloch is at once writer, trickster and go-between, skillfully manipulating his "totalizing regard" as he moves from discipline to discipline and from theory to text, not above legerdemain and the occasional violence, but always (already) aware of the polyvalence of his words.

carried out on wide open spaces between rival local communities - or even institutionalized within the boundary walls of churchyards as congregations emerged from Mass. Crowd hooliganism or bloodthirsty interruptions might easily alter the course of play or affect the outcome of the match. Early forms of football seem to have had a reputation of being peculiarly lethal. Death was frequent through heavy tackling but deliberate, cold-blooded murder, such as that recorded in Cheshire in 1321, when two brothers stood accused of using their victim's head as the ball, was happily rarer.

Freezing winters produced a varied range of ice sports. Skating with bones shaped and smoothed to fit under shoes is described by the twelfth-century chronicler, William Fitzstephen, and is also known to us through archaeological finds. Wrestling, that "foul and unthrifty occupation", was enjoyed quite as much as the traditional sport of archery, which might be pursued either formally at the butts or standard practice-grounds or, more popularly, by "roving", which involved the use of random targets over any distance.

The English love of the horse was early apparent in the treatment of palfreys, the best saddle horses: Henry III in 1232 spared no expense to "cure the royal palfrey dying at Harrow." Choices of colour was equally of great importance, grey being the most fashionable and as many as five different shades being distinguished. Such sports as cock-fighting and bear-baiting or bull-running were also enjoyed to the full. Kings could afford to set up menageries and imported rare and exotic animals to their parks and castle grounds. Henry III, whose interests ranged from leopards and bears to the famous elephant which lived inside the Tower of London from 1255 until its untimely death a year or two later, had bad luck with most of his rarer animals, whose lives in captivity appear to have been brief. At the other end of the scale were domestic pets, such as the "one humble, self-effacing little dog unlikely to yelp or caper" allowed by Archbishop Peckham to senior nuns, or the cat considered suitable to keep reclusive silent company in the thirteenth century.

Teresa McLean is at her best in the second half of the book, where she deals with hunting, hawking, tournaments and with the apparently more restful pastimes of board-games, gardening, singing and folk games and, above all, with medieval drama. Here she is far more in control of the material and presents it in an interesting and vivid manner. She is not content with the sociological or psychological carried with the book does not tell us why, if only describes how. It is more for those interested in sport for its own sake than for those who want to understand the medieval society in which it was played.

## Unfamiliar affections

Julie Hankey

STANLEY WELLS (Editor)  
*Shakespeare Survey: An annual Survey of Shakespearean study and production*  
 203pp. Cambridge University Press. £19.50.  
 0521 25636 4

An article by Susan Snyder in this issue of *Shakespeare Survey* quotes Auden's elegy on Yeats as a description of Shakespeare's own fate: "Now scattered among a hundred cities / And wholly given over to unfamiliar affections", his words "modified in the guts of the living". It is a neat re-application, and many of the other articles here are concerned with it, in one way or another.

A group of scholars in one city, Cairo, has already modified (or restored) Shakespeare's name to Shayk al-Subair, in recognition of his extraordinary feeling for Arabia. Wole Soyinka, who reports this and other fascinating facts about Shakespeare in Arabia - for example the committee set up by the government of the United Arab Republic to translate his works - is reluctantly doubtful about the Shayk al-Subair idea. Reluctantly, because it feels uncannily right where *Antony and Cleopatra* is concerned. Orlando or Romeo, say, would immediately shock an Arabian or North African - publicizing their love as they do, with no thought of the girl's honour or her family's reputation, and one of them even hanging her name on the trees. But with Cleopatra it is another matter. To Egyptians it is like coming home. She speaks to them more particularly and more intimately than a European could possibly imagine.

Cleopatra's feeling for death as a house, as a physical place of abode ("Then is it sin / To rush into the secret house of death . . . ?") is more than figurative, says Soyinka. The ancient Osiric mysteries impart an actuality to the poetry, a sense of imminence which can, however, only be "fully absorbed by an Egyptian, or one steeped in the esoteric cults of Egypt and allied religions, including Islam". The interruptions of Caesar and the South-sayer notwithstanding, the whole last act, after Antony's death has virtually put an end to the historical matter of the play, is Shakespeare's induction into that nether world. The last tableau is on the verge of it, a preparatory not a

closing ritual, with Cleopatra dressed for arrival as much as for departure and the asp sucking its nurse to sleep in token of the union of life and death.

In support of his theme Soyinka draws upon classical Arabic poetry and the Islamic Book of the Dead. At the same time, he plays with the Shayk al-Subair idea, and in a parting gesture he nominates a certain Hanna Hathawa as his wife. But he is only half playing. He is deeply moved by the Shayk, not only in his understanding of the ancient cults but also in his instinct for the "moist land" of Egypt, and its equivalent erotic and emotional terrain within the chief protagonists.

It is an intriguing speculation that other cultures might offer a more direct route to Shakespeare than the culture of his own country 400 years on. Arabs, or, for the sake of change, Sicilians might find Othello's treatment of Desdemona far less of a problem than modern English audiences do. Lu Gu-Sun of Fudan University, Shanghai, describes in an article here the beginnings of Chinese interest in Shakespeare during the first decades of this century. *Hamlet*, apparently, was a favourite among young intellectuals at the time of the Chinese Revolution in 1911-12 "with his fiery protests against corruption and injustice". Others were more impressed with the simplicities of a king revenged, a usurper overthrown and a prince conducting himself according to the traditional code of filial piety and chastity - good Confucian that he was.

Admittedly that was three generations ago, and Lu Gu-Sun himself, believing ghosts and bloody murder to be out of date now, suggests that the emphasis in future *Hamlet*-studies should be on the prince's social relations (or their absence) rather than on his metaphysical speculations. But reading Philip Edwards on "Tragic balance in *Hamlet*" one suspects that the old Chinese might have been fortunate in being out of date.

A lively sense of ghosts and bloody murder, of Heaven and Hell and everlasting damnation is just what we do need in order to understand *Hamlet*, says Edwards. Without them, especially during this agnostic and morally tolerant century, critical opinion in the West has drained all the tragedy from the play. *Hamlet*'s moral ferocity appears merely as an adolescent failure to see both sides of the question, and his achievement is only a heap of unnecessarily

## First and second thoughts

Philip Edwards

GARY TAYLOR and MICHAEL WARREN  
 (Editors)  
*The Division of the Kingdoms: Shakespeare's Two Versions of 'King Lear'*  
 489pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £35.  
 0193 12924 6

Unlike Jonson or Massinger, Shakespeare did not see to the publication of his plays, and none of the early printed texts is fully authentic. Many of the plays exist in more than one early version, with marked differences between them. It has been the common assumption that where two or more versions of the text of a play exist, each can be used to help establish the true text, which may have become tarnished by many different agents of transmission, scribes, pirates, compositors and above all men of the theatre adapting and abbreviating the master's work for the stage. Recently, however, renewed attention has been paid to the possibility that Shakespeare, like a host of other dramatists, may have revised his own plays as they moved through rehearsal and into production, so that the existence of two versions of the same play may indicate authoritative revision. I myself believe that some (by no means all) of the notable differences between the two good texts of *Hamlet* are arguably the result of Shakespeare making alterations to his play just before it went into production, thereby reshaping its central issues.

The textual problem of *King Lear* is even more vexed than that of *Hamlet*, though I think the essential features are remarkably similar. The Quarto text (1608) and the shorter Folio text (1623) can each lay exclusive claim to in-

disputably Shakespearean elements. Editorial tradition, clearly and ably described in the present volume by Stanley Wells and Steven Urkowitz, believing that each of the versions had an imperfect share of a common original, has conflated the two versions to produce the *King Lear* which we all know. For the last year or so Michael Warren, Steven Urkowitz, Gary Taylor and others have been arguing that there is no common original and that the two texts represent an early version and a later revision. Each version makes sense on its own and conflation is held to produce a play that Shakespeare never wrote. The present book is the manifesto of the anti-conflation school.

It is remarkable that some of the most famous phrases in *Lear* are to be found only in the later and shorter Folio text. These include the last line of the Fool, "And I'll go to bed at noon", the last line of Lear himself, "Look on her, look, her lips! Look there, look there!", as well as the central words of the crazed king, "None does offend, none, I say none". It is indeed hard to believe that the Folio does not contain some of Shakespeare's additions and second thoughts. But though I am sympathetic to the general idea of Shakespeare as a reviser, I remain unconvinced by the main thesis of this book, that the Folio text is a Shakespearean recension of his early version as given in the Quarto. The older theory still seems much more likely: that the Quarto is an imperfect rendering of Shakespeare's full text, and that the Folio is an often more true rendering, including some Shakespearean second thoughts and some passages lost from the Quarto of the play, shortened and adapted by someone other than Shakespeare.

*The Division of the Kingdoms* is an extremely long book, very detailed, and taxing to read,

dead bodies with Fortinbras the obvious winner. Edwards develops his argument very persuasively, though he sees more specifically religious fear in the "To be or not to be" soliloquy than I can. And I wonder whether, like Soyinka, he gives people less credit for imagination than they deserve - whether ordinary readers (as opposed to the critics) are as irreversibly modern as he fears.

The task of reconstituting Shakespeare while he is half way through some digestive process is pursued in a different area by Alan C. Dessen. His subject is the different sorts of textual cuts made by theatre directors, and the more or less obvious damage that these can cause. The last section of his article is especially useful in that it questions what usually goes unnoticed: small smoothings out of "awkward" stagings, or technical "improvements", such as real stage darkness. For example, Kent in *King Lear* is left in the stocks during Edgar's entrance and speech, even though Edgar does not appear to notice him. The custom is to black Kent out. But as Dessen points out, Shakespeare's staging makes visible the analogy between their situations. (It is just this sort of point that the reconstructed Globes in Detroit and on the South Bank in London will be able to test.)

But there will always be things left over that are open to choice, as the articles by Ralph Berry on Komisarjevsky and Ann Fridén on Ingmar Bergman remind one: like whether you put the two Dromios in *The Comedy of Errors* into pink bowler hats or not, and whether you have one of the witches in *Macbeth* dressed like a whore with a Lady Macbeth mask on, or not. Shakespeare didn't say. Komisarjevsky and Ingmar Bergman said yes to each, respectively.

Both Berry and Fridén give space simply to describing the Shakespeare productions of these directors, and their effect on the critics at the time, but Berry attempts more in trying to refurbish Komisarjevsky's reputation for being merely a gimmicky trickster insensible to Shakespeare's poetry (Eugenie Leontovich's rendering of "O wretched is the garland of the war" was once transcribed as "O Weedridge degarano devar"). He succeeds in showing him to have been textually responsible (by the theatre standards of the time), and theatrically brilliant - though, after so many subsequent jolly japes, one groans inwardly at some of his jokey ideas and settings.

requiring the constant presence of copies of the Quarto text, the Folio text, and the received text. There are eleven contributors, and I cannot help feeling that there are too many authors and too few plays. The problem of *Lear* cannot be solved in isolation, but needs to be taken within the wider issue of revision in Shakespeare, including especially the related question of *Hamlet*. There is an excellent example in the book of what can be done by comparative work in a fine essay by John Kerrigan, which adds considerably to the present debate by a survey of revision in other dramatists besides Shakespeare. Apart from this, the focus is too narrow for a book of this size.

A major question in the reader's mind will be why Shakespeare should have produced his *King Lear* Number Two. Although several contributors, citing Wordsworth, argue that a revision doesn't have to be better, it is a recurring problem to find good reasons why Shakespeare should have got rid of two vital incidents, the arraignment of Goneril, and the scene of Cornwall's appalled servants arranging to help the blinded Gloucester. Roger Warren says that by the time we reach the arraignment "an audience is beginning to tire anyway", so Shakespeare cut his losses with the aim of "sustaining audience attention". Gary Taylor argues that Shakespeare knew that the arraignment scene was a failure. He wanted to avoid trouble with the censor, and so was not able to make it as good as Genet would have done. It is an unusual view of the deficiency of the arraignment scene that a joint-stool is an inadequate image of Goneril.

There has always been a tendency among the anti-conflationists to pit "literature" against "drama" and the vein is well-marked in this



A plate from the Mutus Liber showing the final phase of the opus; the appearance of the four windows in the laboratory indicate completeness; the zodiacal sign of Libra appears in connection with the confection. It is reproduced from Prospero's Island: The secret alchemy at the heart of The Tempest by Noel Cobb (123pp. Covenure, 23 Chesham Street, London SW1, £5.05, 0904575 268).

After the director's, there is one last phase of Shakespearean creativity: the writer's. Stoppard's *Hamlet*-plays (*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* and *Dog's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth*) have, as Jill L. Levenson shows, passed so far down the digestive tract that criticism involves identifying and appraising the influence of, say, Wittgenstein and Beckett as much as of Shakespeare. By contrast, Auden's Shakespeare in *The Sea and the Mirror* is more Auden than anything else. Susan Snyder explores the biographical and philosophical background to Auden's doubts about the seriousness of poetry ("poetry makes nothing happen"); and then goes lucidly through the poem.

There are as many more articles again, though not all of them are on the title theme. But as a theme it has proved fruitful, and makes for a wide-ranging and yet homogeneous issue.

## Bishops in decline

A. J. Forey

PAUL H. FREEDMAN  
*The Diocese of Vic: Tradition and Regeneration in Medieval Catalonia*  
 230pp. Rutgers University Press. \$20.  
 08135 0970

The developments and changes taking place in frontier regions have attracted the attention of many historians of medieval Spain. By contrast Paul H. Freedman seeks to show that there was also adaptation and innovation in a district which is seen as being, in the twelfth century, not only away from the frontier but also ignored and neglected by the rulers of Catalonia: the alliance and common interests which had existed between the bishop of Vic and the count of Barcelona up to 1100, and which had allowed the bishop to play an important role in Catalan affairs, are contrasted with the neglect shown in the twelfth century by both counts and kings.

Despite its title, the book is not primarily concerned with the internal affairs of the church. Freedman notes that Vic was little affected by reform movements in the twelfth century; a section on the cathedral chapter contains some interesting comments on its

recruitment and finances, but the local clergy are not discussed and little is said about religious houses within the diocese. The main theme is the relations between the church of Vic and lay society. Freedman examines the defence of episcopal rights in the city of Vic against encroachments by nobles and townsmen, as well as the bishop's control over castles within the diocese. In the twelfth century the bishop lost some rights, but managed to salvage a good deal, and was successful in thwarting an attempt to establish a consular regime in the city itself. As a means of settling disputes various forms of compromise were employed, in contrast to the earlier practice of judgment by professional judges. Freedman's treatment of these topics is clear, detailed and competent, and his conclusion that there was adaptation and innovation to meet changing circumstances, particularly in the settlement of disputes, is unexceptionable, if not altogether unexpected.

Yet one must have doubts about the framework in which the discussion is set. Conflicting statements are made about the date when Vic ceased altogether to be a frontier diocese, and the attitudes adopted by the counts of Barcelona and later kings of Aragon in the twelfth century require more convincing demonstration and explanation. It is difficult, for example, to discuss a frontier diocese

tic gesture the count's gift of the castle of Palomera, which was made shortly before the nearby city of Lleida fell to the Christians in 1149. Apart from any short-term consequences of a hypothetical breach between bishop Berenguer and Ramon Berenguer III in the closing years of the eleventh century, the explanations advanced for neglect in the twelfth century are that the rulers were then interested in the frontier regions, not Catalunya Vella, and that the bishops of the latter region were no longer of much importance to them: there had been changes in the foundations of comital power, and on the frontier other groups, including magnates and military orders, were of more significance. Yet some of the more westerly parts of the diocese of Vic were still march areas until the middle years of the twelfth century; no military order was of any importance in the *reconquista* until well into the 1140s; and despite changes in the nature of comital power, which had been taking place well before 1100, the bishop of Vic in the twelfth century still owed military and other obligations to the ruler of Catalonia. One would also normally expect the withdrawal of protection to be occasioned by something stronger than indifference, and a fuller explanation is needed of the revival of royal interest and concern which apparently occurred in the final years of the century.



# Right and wrong causal stories

W. H. Newton-Smith

NANCY CARTWRIGHT  
How the Laws of Physics Lie  
221pp. Oxford University Press. £16  
(paperback, £7.95).  
0 198247001  
IAN HACKING  
Representing and Intervening: Introductory  
Topics in the Philosophy of Natural Science  
287pp. Cambridge University Press. £20  
(paperback, £5.95).  
0521238293

In *How the Laws of Physics Lie* Nancy Cartwright challenges the view that the aim of science is the discovery of true, fundamental laws. Unlike the instrumentalist, who thinks that there are no true laws because of doubts about the existence of theoretical entities such as electrons, she allows us our theoretical entities but denies that there are any true, fundamental laws about them. Except for phenomenological laws (which merely describe without explaining), laws are only true in separate, idealized domains. Any actual situation in the world will involve laws from different domains and these tell us little about what then happens. To the metaphysical picture of a tidy world in which there are laws for every case, if only we could find them, she claims to offer an equally plausible untidy alternative: "God may have written just a few laws and grown tired".

The denial of factual truth is restricted to theoretical laws (laws which explain). There are, we are told, large numbers of "highly accurate" phenomenological laws of applied physics and engineering. But given the noto-

rious difficulty of disentangling description and explanation, sorting laws into different kinds for different treatment on this basis is going to be problematic. Furthermore, it will be objected that the so-called phenomenological laws are as described: highly accurate. If we give up regarding fundamental laws factually because they are only true of idealized situations, why do we not do the same for phenomenological laws? For in virtue of being highly but not perfectly accurate, they hold, strictly speaking, not of real situations but of idealized ones. If the difference is then a matter of degree why this dramatic difference in our regard for them?

Fundamental laws are used in explanation. Since, on the standard model of explanation, one needs the truth or a sufficient degree of approximation to it, Professor Cartwright offers instead a "simulacrum" account. To explain successfully is to give a model in which one can derive approximations to the true phenomenological laws and can "tell the right causal stories". Disarmingly, Cartwright replies to the obvious question as to what it is to do this: "I do not have an answer". Honesty does not, alas, generate conviction and the absence of even the roughest indications of a theory of causation weakens seriously the force of her overall position. That aside, the book is a significant addition to the literature. The central thesis is novel, the argumentation lively and forceful, the book is rich in material drawn from the actual explanatory practices of scientists.

In what is in effect a companion work, Ian Hacking provides a similar vision of science: actual scientific praxis shows the real existence of some theoretical entities and the unimportant

ance of thinking about theories in terms of truth. The first part of the book, "Representing", provides a lively critical survey of the work of the main figures in recent philosophy of science and so is about theories. Too brisk to be fully convincing, its refreshingly provocative style and broad sweep will excite readers much more than the usual woodenly written introductions.

The real importance of this work lies in the second half, "Intervening", which directs attention to the neglected topic of experimentation. Using detailed consideration of specific experimental work, Professor Hacking explicates conceptions of observation, measurement and experimentation which make these largely independent of theory. In so doing he challenges the standard theory-oriented picture of a discontinuous history of science. Those of philosophical temperament seeking neat generalizations giving a theory of experimentation will be disappointed. The author's Borgesian vision of the world as governed by masses of laws inconsistent with one another, each applying here or there without any of them applying everywhere, extends to philosophy. Some general morals are drawn, however. For example, Hacking argues that experimentation provides the best evidence for a realism about theoretical entities such as electrons through using them to investigate nature, i.e. the electron guns used in the PEGGY II experiments.

Between the two halves of the book comes a

"Break", described as a parable, which in its tendency to obscurity it resembles. We are here defined as representors. The debate between the realist and anti-realist arises because of our tendency to focus exclusively on representations. There are alternative representations of the world between which we are powerless to choose. Thus, truth about representations is not possible. At the level of representation there is no conclusion to the debate and so, it is said, we should turn to the other source of our ideas of what is real: what can affect us and what we can affect. In this case the realist wins. For many theoretical entities are used by us to produce effects.

We need an account of the relation between representing and intervening. Hacking's argument for realism derives from a representation he provides about what is going on in certain experiments. But if representation is inherently open to the possibility of alternatives which preclude the realist having any advantage, why does that not apply to Hacking's own discourse? Why not adapt a different representation at this level, that of a sophisticated instrumentalist, about what is going on in the PEGGY II experiments? Would not that on his own terms undermine the argument? No doubt Hacking has an answer, but unfortunately he does not give it.

These two books are important. They do more than merely articulate some theory or other in the philosophy of science; they give a new and interesting direction to the subject.

## Panpsychic powers

Howard Robinson

T. L. S. SPRIGGE  
The Vindication of Absolute Idealism  
291pp. Edinburgh University Press. £17.50.  
085224455 X

Philosophical idealism comes in two forms. First, there is subjective idealism, originally expounded by Bishop Berkeley, according to which minds, their acts and their experiences are the only realities. Apart from individual finite (eg. human) minds there is also the Divine Mind which produces the experiences in the finite minds. The second version - *objective* or *absolute* idealism - follows Berkeley in denying that anything can exist outside of mind, but instead of making the physical world a function of the organization of our experience, it treats the physical world itself as a living mind, or collection of minds. Indeed it is both a collection and a single mind, because all minds are expressions or aspects of the Absolute or World Soul.

Both forms of idealism are unpopular with contemporary philosophers, but the Berkeleyan variety is so intimately connected with British empiricism that it is close to the centre of the analytical tradition and recently there have been various attempts to revive it. Absolute idealism, on the other hand, is taken as representing the woolly and mysterious philosophy that analytical philosophy displaced. It is this idealism that T. L. S. Sprigge wishes to revive.

Simplifying greatly, Professor Sprigge's argument can be reduced to two stages. First, there are general arguments for idealism, which rest on adopting an imagist theory of thought. Sprigge argues that the properties we experience cannot be conceived of as existing outside the mind and that we can form proper "intuitively fulfilled" concepts only of items we experience. Though we can conceive that there may be something intrinsically different from the contents of experience, we cannot conceive at all what it could be like, and it is always better to adopt a hypothesis which does not involve things we cannot imagine. It follows that panpsychism - the theory that everything is mind - is the best hypothesis because at least we know what mental states (ie. experiences) are like, whereas other theories of matter are speculative and empty.

Having thus reached idealism, he then uses an argument common among absolute idealists to show that everything is part of the same mind: this is the purported proof that all reality is mental. This means that, on two

things can be related unless they are part of the same interdependent system. As the first part of the argument has shown that everything exists only in mind, it will follow if all relations are internal then all related things are part of the same mental system. Everything physical is interrelated spatially and temporally, so everything must be part of the same mind.

Sprigge's argument for the internality of all relations comes by pressing Berkeley's principle that we cannot conceive what we cannot imagine further than do most empiricists. It is not merely that we cannot conceive of things not in experience, we cannot even detach parts or features of experience from the context in which they occur. So if I experience a red patch to the left of my visual field against a blue background and then a similar shaped red patch in the right of my visual field against a grey background the patches would be intrinsically different from each other because of the difference in their experiential context. Even if my visual experiences had been exactly similar, but one had occurred when I was cheerful and another when I was depressed, the red patches would still have been intrinsically different by being "infected" by the different moods. So, strictly speaking, nothing can be conceived of except in the context in which it actually occurs and all relations are essential to the nature of an object. So if objects in the world are related at all they must be what they are by being features of the same mental system.

It is pleasing to find a British philosopher defending such an unashamedly metaphysical system. Sprigge's book should stimulate interest in absolute idealism, but I doubt whether it will make many converts as there seem to be major weaknesses in both stages of the argument.

Whether it is best to postulate something the intrinsic nature of which we do not understand, rather than something whose nature we do understand will depend on the consequences. If a consequence of postulating what one intuitively understands is that electrons are all ephemerally minded (as Sprigge believes) then this might be thought a serious disadvantage of so proceeding. Indeed, what sense can we make of the idea of consciousness which is so much simpler than our consciousness as a simple feature of experience are modified by every other current feature. I see no reason to accept this. (His replies to William James's criticisms of panpsychic holism, however, I found quite convincing.)

## Paperback fiction in brief

Patricia Craig

SHENA MACKEY. *An Advent Calendar*. 158pp. Bloodaxe Books. £2.95. 0 906427 61 4. What do you do if you've inadvertently eaten a chopped-off finger? This is the problem - one of the problems - that confronts Shena Mackey's character John Wood, in her fifth novel (first published in 1971). This author deserves great credit for the peculiarity of her manner, at once impassive and highly charged; for the way she converts frightfulness into the stuff of comedy, and for her biting and macabre observations.

ELIZABETH BOWEN. *Collected Stories*. 784pp. Penguin. £4.95. 0 14 006265 3. Seventy-nine stories make up this collection; the earliest of them were originally published as *Encounters* (1923) and *Ann Lee's* (1926). "A blend of precocity and naivete", Elizabeth Bowen said of these, rereading them after many years. The chronological arrangement enables us to applaud the increasing complexity and obliqueness of the stories, as well as their author's virtuosity - all these qualities culminating in the remarkable wartime volume *The Demon Lover* (1945). On the subject of the short story, Elizabeth Bowen has written that it "should be as composed, in the plastic sense, and as visual as a picture" - and her own work leaves us in no doubt about her mastery of this particular form.

ELIZABETH BOWEN. *The House in Paris*. 239pp. Penguin. £2.50. 0 14 00 0535 8. "The House in Paris" is a novel about sex, time, and the discovery of identity", A. S. Byatt says in her admirable introduction to Elizabeth Bowen's ninth book (published in 1935). It starts with two children, brought, for separate purposes, to a particular house in Paris; shifts back to the past to account for the existence of one of them, Leopold; and draws all its strands together in a striking final section. One of Elizabeth Bowen's most impressive works of fiction.

ALICE MUNRO. *Dance of the Happy Shades*. 224pp. Penguin. £2.50. 0 14 007781 0. This collection of fifteen stories (published in 1968) was Alice Munro's first book. The setting, rough and dingy for the most part, is southwestern Ontario, the theme is generally concerned with some small victory for understanding or enlargement of outlook, and the tone is always marvellously laconic and ironic. In "Boys and Girls" the sturdy narrator, at a certain age, has feminine characteristics thrust upon her; in "An Ounce of Cure" - a very funny story - a slighted adolescent reaches for a whiskey bottle and learns more than she bargained for about the effects of drink. An exceptionally polished and engaging book.

NADINE GORDIMER. *The Lying Days*. 367pp. 0 86068 313 3. *Occasion For Loving*. 288pp. 0 86068 312 5. Virago. £3.50 each. Nadine Gordimer's first and third novels (1950 and 1963 respectively) are now reissued, both with informative introductions by Paul Bailey. The title of *The Lying Days* refers to the evasions and deceptions inherent in the typical white South African upbringing; in *Occasion For Loving* an unlawful affair between a white woman and a black South African painter is the central theme. There is a certain kind of fiction to which we turn for the most thoughtful elaboration of political facts; and Nadine Gordimer's serious, intelligent and entertaining novels stand, among other things, as an indictment of an illiberal régime.

USA ST AUBIN DE TERAN. *Keepers of the House*. 183pp. Penguin. £2.50. 0 14 006372 2. *Keepers of the House*, a first novel published in 1982, is set in a Venezuelan valley and consists for the most part of striking episodes in the history of its ruling family, the Beltrams, recounted by the young English girl who married the last of them. Written in plain, unabashed prose, with only occasional lapses into portentousness, it makes the most of all the bizarre and colourful ingredients its location provides.

ROBERT GRAVES. *Seven Days in New Crete*. 281pp. Oxford University Press. £2.95. 0 19

281385 4. Time-travelling is a familiar theme in children's fiction; here, in a novel first published in 1949, Robert Graves adapts it for an adult readership, with his poet-hero transported to an antiseptic future. Many of Graves's enduring preoccupations find an outlet in the book, as Martin Seymour-Smith points out in his introduction - in particular, his concern with myth and ritual, and his feeling for the poet Laura Riding.

STORM JAMESON. *Love in Winter*. 397pp. £3.95. 0 86068 315 X. *None Turn Back*. 319pp. £3.50. 0 86068 320 6. Virago. *Company Parade* (1934) has already been reissued by Virago, and now we have its sequel, *Love in Winter* (1935) and *None Turn Back* (1936), to complete Storm Jameson's *The Mirror in Darkness* trilogy. This deals with the experiences of Hervey Russell - novelist, mother of one son, unfortunate wife of one man and contented wife of another - up until the General Strike of 1926. It's a bit of a catch-all undertaking: the mood in London, the behaviour of industrialists, the misuse of power, the misfortunes of various peripheral characters, the tedium of literary gatherings and so on are all brought in to supplement what is essentially the story of Hervey's increasing affection for her cousin Nicholas Roxby, and her eventual marriage to him. When Nicholas confesses to Hervey that he finds her novels "too emotional" to read, you feel it's perhaps a valid criticism of Storm Jameson too. Many straightforward accounts of rather fraught relationships get into her fiction. However, these books are rather less bland and emotional in tone than the somewhat unsatisfactory introductions by Elaine Feinstein which come with the current editions.

A. S. BYATT. *The Game*. 238pp. Penguin. £2.50. 0 14 00 6377 3. The Brontës' world of Gondal and Angria is the inspiration for a childhood game evolved by two sisters, Cassandra and Julia Corbett, one, in later life, a medievalist and withdrawn, the other a novelist and outgoing. The affinities and tensions between the sisters are at the centre of A. S. Byatt's complex and thoughtful novel (her second, first published in 1967), which, among other things, considers the ethics of the novelist's appropriation of real people for the purposes of fiction.

ELIZABETH JANE HOWARD. *Getting It Right*. 286pp. Penguin. £1.95. 0 14 00 6477 X. This is the story of Gavin Lamb, a hairdresser, thirty-one years old and still a virgin - a state about to change, once he gets together with fifteen-stone Joan, an unhappy heiress in diamante glasses and an orange wig. On top of this inauspicious alliance, a sweet unmarried mother, his assistant at work, and an awful anorexic named Lady Minerva contrive to complicate things for gormless Gavin. What the author spectacularly fails to get right is her tone, which isn't sharp enough for satire, or quirky enough for passable social comedy. The result is simply preposterous and tiresome.

## AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 164  
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than March 30. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct - in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 164" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on April 6.

1 "How did you get your wooden leg?"  
Mr. — replied (partly to this personal inquiry),  
"In an accident."  
"Do you like it?"  
"Well I haven't got to keep it warm," Mr. — made answer, in a sort of desperation occasioned by the singularity of the question.

DASHIELL HAMMETT. *The Continental Op*. 255pp. Picador. £2.50. 0 330 28195 X. *The Continental* is a detective agency, the "Op" one of its employees; Hammett's formidable narrator, antagonist of gangsterism in all its forms, gets no more identification than this. In the seven stories collected here, which originally appeared in the magazine *Black Mask* between 1923 and 1930, you have the start of a new, quintessentially American approach to the writing of crime fiction. Hammett, of course, went on to deepen and elaborate, in his handful of novels, the "hard-boiled" method he invented; his stories, all the same, even for a present-day readership, remain striking and entertaining.

HENRY ROTH. *Call it Sleep*. 440pp. Penguin. £2.95. 0 14 003893 0. Henry Roth's only novel, first published in 1934, *Call it Sleep* deals with the lives of Jewish immigrants to New York in the early part of the century. The central character is David Schearl, eight when the novel ends, and his childish perplexity, desperation and outrage are powerfully evoked. If the dialect seems strained and overdone - "Ooo, waid'll I gitchool!" - the book is nevertheless pointed and energetic in its depiction of strife-ridden scenes.

DAVID MARTIN. *The Road to Ballyshannon*. 156pp. Abacus. £1.95. 0 349 12385 5 7. David Martin's novel - part allegory, part political thriller - is set in Ireland in 1922, and concerns the trek westwards of two escaped republican prisoners, and the police sergeant they take as hostage. Tense and laconic for the most part, *The Road to Ballyshannon* (published in 1982) shows a good deal of insight into the ideological complexities and confusions bound up with the origins of the state of Ulster.

JOHN WAIN. *Young Shoulders*. 144pp. Black Swan. £1.95. 0 552 99057 4. In *Young Shoulders* (first published in 1982) seventeen-year-old Paul Waterford accompanies his own and other bereaved parents on a journey to Spain, after a planeload of schoolchildren (Paul's sister Clare among them) has died in an air disaster. As is usual with the adolescent first-person narration, the tone of the book is rather jaunty and chatty; and it deals humanely and optimistically with its distressing topic.

SHUSAKU ENDO. *The Samurai*. 272pp. Penguin. £2.95. 0 14 00 6557 1. Seventeenth-century Japan, its resistance to Christianity, and the efforts of a missionary Jesuit to establish Catholicism in the country (efforts which include a sea voyage to Mexico, Spain and Rome) are the themes of this novel, first published in 1982, by Japan's leading Catholic novelist. "Endo analyses once more the tremendous impact of the European will on the Japanese nature", the *TLS* reviewer wrote; and certainly it's a powerful work.

God bless them! the sole comforts of my life."

Competition No 160  
Winner: Philip Tait

Answers:  
1 "... but their manner of writing is very peculiar; being neither from the left to the right, like the Europeans; nor from the right to the left, like the Arabians; nor from up to down, like the Chinese; nor from down to up, like the Casagians; but aslant from one corner of the paper to the other, like ladies in England."  
Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, book 1, chapter 6.

2 "I've wrote the lines demanded in a hand as gentlemanly as that of any viscount or bishop of the day: the vowels were all alike and the consonants only distinguishable as turning up or down, the strokes had a blotched solidity and the letters disdained to keep the line - in short, it was a manuscript of that venerable kind easy to interpret when you know beforehand what the writer means."  
George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, chapter 56.

3 She started the pen in an elephantine march across the sheet. It was a splendid round, bold hand of her own conception, a style that would have stamped a woman as Minerva's own in more recent days.  
Thomas Hardy, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, chapter 20.

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